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MAKING ARCHAEOLOGY ABROAD. A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE IN MALTA

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PHD

Signed declaration

I, Anna Maria Rossi confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

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Abstract

This research is about the archaeological making of the Tas-Silġ site in Malta. Archaeological investigations in Tas-Silġ have been mainly carried out by a foreign research entity (*Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*). This research explores nature, development and impact of the Italian project within the wider context of Maltese political and archaeological decolonisation.

To unpack the making of the Tas-Silġ site, this study looks into the micro politics of the archaeological process and unravels the tensions that have accompanied it. In particular this study: 1) micro-excavates the convoluted process that established and maintained an Italian research team as privileged interpret of the archaeology in Tas-Silġ; 2) assesses impacts and relevance of this long-term Italian project in postcolonial Malta; and 3) examines how archaeological process and site layout interact to produce forms of intellectual and physical dislocation.

The research adopts a qualitative approach to give voice to the whole gamut of participants that have defined, negotiated and challenged the making of Tas-Silġ.

The research shows that *Missione* control over the site and the archaeological knowledge derived from its investigations is highly controversial. However it reaches the conclusion that *Missione* involvement in Malta cannot be assessed against binary categories of local/foreigner and colonial/postcolonial although those elements have a role in defining this association. In addressing the situated complexity of making archaeology in Tas-Silġ, this research sets up a space of discussion on the ambivalence of foreign archaeology in decolonised countries.

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Chapter 1 **Introduction**

1.1 An archaeological gem in Malta

The archaeological site of Tas-Silġ is located in the district of Marsaxlokk in the south-eastern part of the island of Malta (Figure 1-1). It is situated on a low hill that overlooks the wide harbour of Marsaxlokk to the south, and St. Thomas bay and Marsascala to the northeast and commending inland views as well (Figure 1-2; 1-4).

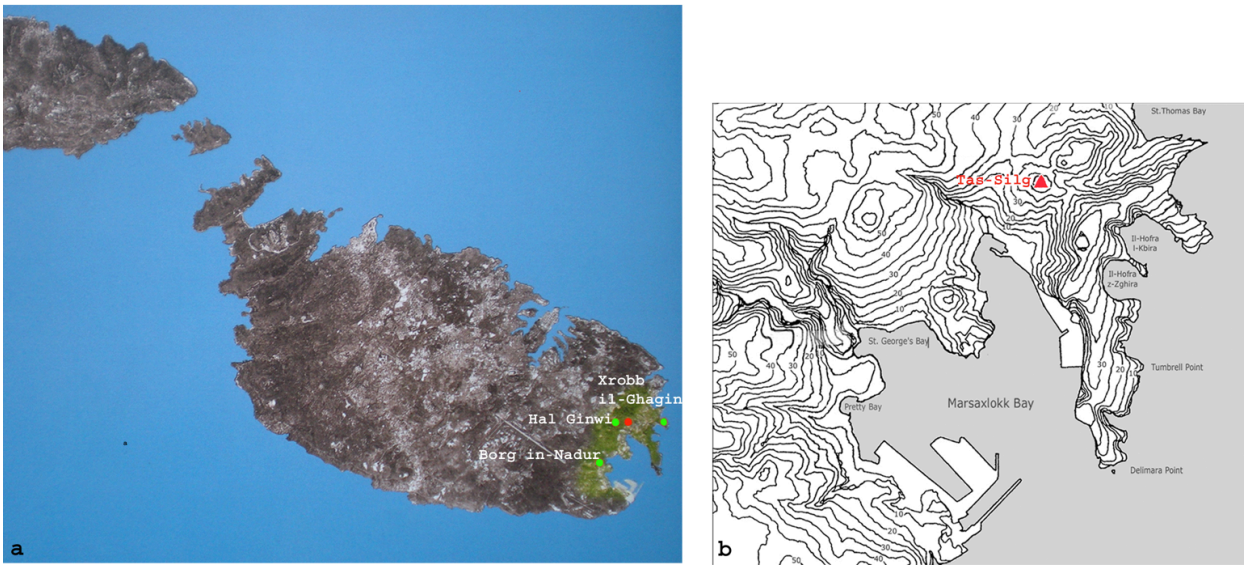

Figure 1-1: a. Distribution of prehistoric temple sites in the south-eastern part of Malta (after Cilia 2004, 98); b. Marsaxlokk district (after Recchia 2004-2005, 237, *fig. 5*).

Figure 1-2: The Tas-Silġ site from the Marsaxlokk bay (photograph by Anna Maria Rossi, October 2009).

Figure 1-3: Aerial view of the Tas-Silġ site with the 1960s limestone wall still standing (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

Figure 1-4: Views from the Tas-Silġ site: a. of Marsaxlokk bay with Tas-Silġ convent in the foreground and Birzebbgia Freeport on the background; b. of the coastline to the North-West; c. of the inland to the North-North-East (Reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

Tas-Silġ is easily accessible from both Zejtun and Marsaxlokk. It is just a few-minutes drive from Zejtun along the narrow road to Delimara and Xrobb L-Għaġin (Figure 1-5). It is within a stone's throw of the fishing village of Marsaxlokk, which in the last decades has turned into a popular hit-and-run tourist attraction thanks to its outdoor market and its restaurants.

Figure 1-5: a. Zejtun - Xrobb L-Għaġin road with a view on the hill of Tas-Silġ; b. Boundary between Zejtun and Marsaxlokk administrative territories (photographs by Anna Maria Rossi, October 2009).

The walk to the site from the village is short but rather steep. From the village centre the Tas-Silġ road climbs uphill and passes by the monastery of Our Lady of the Snows (il-Madonna Tas-Silġ) before meeting the Zejtun-Xrobb L-Għaġin road where the entrances to the site are located (Figure 1-7).

Figure 1-6. a. Marsaxlokk village; b. In pictures the walk from Marsaxlokk to the Tas-Silġ site (photographs by Anna Maria Rossi, June 2008 and October 2009).

The archaeological area lies on both sides of this road, forming two separate clusters. The archaeological community has named them the 'North' and 'South' areas, enclosures, and even sites (Figure 1-3). A boundary physically defines the archaeological areas: the high limestone wall erected in the 1960s has been partially replaced by a metal fence and a low dry-stone wall. The site is currently closed to the public (Figure 1-7).

Figure 1-7: a. Plates hanging besides the site entrance (photographs by Anna Maria Rossi, June 2008); b. New and old boundaries of the site (photograph by

Marvin Demicoli); c. Aerial view of the two enclosures with the 1960s limestone wall still standing (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

The archaeological area is usually known as the Tas-Silġ sanctuary, not to be confused with the 19th century Tas-Silġ monastery a few hundred metres away. The site was named after the monastery because of their topographic proximity, but it was extended to a shared transcendent and spiritual dimension (Frendo and Bonanno 2000).

The Tas-Silġ site is an archaeological gem. The archaeological record testifies an intense occupation of the hill over several millennia, from prehistoric to medieval times (see Amadasi Guzzo and Cazzella 2004-2005; Bruno 2004; Ciasca 1999; Ciasca and Rossignani 2000; Recchia 2004-2005; Cazzella and Recchia 2006; 2011; 2012; Rossignani 2005-2006). The archaeological teams that have worked on the site for half a century interpret that Tas-Silġ retained a sacred nature for most of its life: a place consecrated to supernatural entities, yet with functions that transcended the cultic dimension. A Neolithic community developed a magnificent temple site here that was still in use during the Bronze Age (Cazzella and Recchia 2006, 2011; 2012). The Phoenicians then established a sanctuary to their much-revered deity Astarte, who over the centuries became associated with the Greek Hera and the Roman Juno (Ciasca 1999; Ciasca and Rossignani 2000; Rossignani 2009a). Later, a community of Christian faith revived the religious dimension of the place (Bonetti and Perassi 2005-2006; Rossignani 2009b). During Late Antiquity it is likely that religious, trade and military functions coexisted in what became a fortified centre. According to the archaeologists the 'life cycle' of the site ended in approximately the 13th century (Bruno 2004).

The ‘after-life’ of Tas-Silġ belongs to a blurred dimension made of abandonment, spoliation, and reuse, which never appealed to researchers. It is a pause, an interlude between the first act of a millenarian existence and the second act of archaeological investigations that have brought back to light the ruinous structures of the sanctuary.

This study focuses on this second act of archaeological investigations, leaving to others the complex task of making sense of what happened before.

1.2 The shaping of the archaeological site

The investigations carried out over the last fifty years have been instrumental in unveiling and interpreting the archaeological deposit, but also in shaping the material and conceptual space of what is nowadays called the Tas-Silġ archaeological site. This shaping, however, has been substantially disregarded in its actual terms and has attracted very little of scholarly attention in the belief that it does not contribute to the understanding of the site. It has usually been treated as history of the excavations/research, which deserves few lines at the beginning of various archaeological papers. This approach also translates the whole investigation process into a sequence of actions instrumental to rewrite important pages of the site’s millenarian existence.

The underlying general proposition of this study is that years of archaeological investigations on the hill of Tas-Silġ should not be assessed as a stable set of historical facts to be added as embellishment to the interpretation of the site or simply as an instrument to scientific enquiries. Rather they reflect the *locus* where the conceptual and physical identity of the site has taken shape. Unravelling this dimension is key to understanding how the archaeological site of Tas-Silġ has been made. Based on this approach, the present research puts the

circumstances of the making of the archaeological site at the heart of the enquiry.

1.3 Rationale for the specific case study

The Tas-Silġ site is a familiar context. I have worked there for 9 years as a member of the Italian Archaeological Expedition in Malta (the *Missione*) that has carried out archaeological investigations on the site since 1963.

This study is, to some extent, a scholarly response to personal concerns originated at the time of my hands-on experience at the site. It is during those years that the unproblematic and stable meanings of Tas-Silġ started to tilt. The two episodes reported below illustrate the type of issues that captured my attention: 1) the first passage describes the arrival at the site on my first day of excavation; and 2) the second one relates to a specific professional experience that I had few years later.

July 1999. The white minibus stopped before a little metal door opened in a limestone wall of an intense yellowish tone. 'Here we are!' announced Davide the most skilful archaeologist of the team as well as our only reliable driver. We got off in the middle of the road and went through the narrow opened door to a ruined farmhouse, one of these country houses that traditionally marked the Maltese landscape. Stairs led to the second floor of the farmhouse, reduced to a sort of balcony opened onto the archaeological site and beyond. From this privileged position the *Missione*'s Director introduced the site to all of us, new members of the team (Figure 1-8). Her words described a wonderful site: a Neolithic temple, later transformed into the famous Temple of Astarte. It had been a pan-Mediterranean cultural, political

and commercial centre that preserved its fame under Roman influence. Downgraded in its importance, its occupation lasted until the Middle Ages.

Figure 1-8: In pictures physical and intellectual access constrains at Tas-Silġ (a. and d. photographs by Anna Maria Rossi, October 2009; b. and c. reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

In front of us was literally a sea of ruins, quite difficult to understand to an expert eye even with the help of a map. All around a wall, the most monumental feature of the site! Turning to the road, a twin wall bounds another area of the site, the 'South Area' she said. There the University of Malta was carrying out its own excavations. However we were all reassured that the *Missione* held the 'keys' to interpreting the site since it had its hands on the heart of the sanctuary.

I still recall the mixed feeling generated by this first encounter with the site: excited to be participating in this project but also intimidated by the site's complexity. However, over and above the professional challenges, I perceived some anomalies in what it meant making archaeology in Tas-Silġ. I felt instinctively uncomfortable at

looking at the two bounded areas and at listening to the claim that the existence of two completely separate research projects on the same site was not an issue. Italians on one side, and Maltese on the other did not feel right to a naïve post-graduate student. There was something profoundly unsettling in it. At that time, however, I simply accepted it as a matter of fact and let the excitement for the research adventure just started overtake personal concerns.

July 2002. Chiara and I were 'interfaces' between archaeology and conservation. Our job was to set up a comprehensive agenda of *Missione* activities, balancing the often-contrasting excavation and conservation stances. That summer, however, our task was slightly different. It was simply something that neither the archaeologists nor the conservators would have done, so it was kindly offered to the interfaces. Essentially the job was to tidy up the site. After more than 25 years of neglect there was that shared feeling that we archaeologists needed to take the care of the site more seriously; clearing away the many architectural elements and features scattered throughout the archaeological area reflected this new ethical commitment. Other more direct objectives were to make it easier to read the in-situ structures, to facilitate future investigations, and to make the architectural pieces more accessible for study purposes. Our job was basically to remove from the archaeological area every element that appeared to be *non in situ* and to gather them at the collection point (*lapidarium*) created against the boundary wall in the South-Western corner of the Northern area. Every single element was documented thoroughly before and after being removed (Figure 1-9).

Figure 1-9: Tidying up the site: a. Before; b. During; c. After (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

During this boiling summer experience I frequently found myself reflecting on the real meaning of this apparently harmless operation. 'What do *in situ* and not *in situ* mean on this site?' and 'Which authenticity are we trying to preserve and recover?' were the type of questions posed. Moving those pieces was not simply clearing out the site but also, and more importantly, changing it. Specific choices were made to somehow 'recreate' a condition of authenticity, get rid of what was dislocated and non-pertinent (*non in situ*). It was a conceptual challenge to understand what was meant by authentic. Eventually the only possible answer was to attempt to restore the conditions of the site as imprinted by the excavators.

Those circumstances, like many others during my years as a *Missione* member, profoundly affected my understanding of what archaeology is about; in particular 1) the first encounter with the site exposed the paradox of the Italian and Maltese projects and questioned my naive idea of archaeology as neutral scientific endeavour; 2) the experience as middleman between archaeology and conservation forced me outside the comfort zone of my own discipline to understand that our interpretation and approach to material pasts are just one of the many possible.

Based on this experience within *Missione* my professional interest shifted from material pasts as object of archaeological enquiry to material pasts as archaeologically shaped in the present. It took years, however, to absorb those preliminary concerns into the research enquiry that I developed in this work.

1.4 Research objectives

The archaeological making of the Tas-Silġ site is at the heart of this study. It investigates the complexity of this process by digging into micro-politics of archaeological practice and knowledge production. It unfolds minute and nuanced mechanisms of power-relations and gives voice to the actors that have participated in defining, negotiating and challenging this process and its heterogeneous effects.

The research explores the circumstances by which Tas-Silġ has been investigated and the impact of this 'making' on the shaping of Maltese archaeological heritage. It also challenges the assumption that the site is a stable participant in the articulation of a national heritage: Tas-Silġ is on the contrary an evolving and contested territory. To expose these tensions, this research had a series of complementary objectives.

1.4.1 Specific objectives:

1) To unpack the complexity of the relationship between *Missione* and the site of Tas-Silġ. This research avoids tackling the site and the Italian expedition as two separated entities, but rather they are approached throughout from the perspective of their reciprocal relations. Before becoming autonomous entities, their existence was intertwined to the point where we cannot understand the *Missione* without Tas-Silġ and

Tas-Silġ without the *Missione*. To explore these issues the research focuses on:

a) how this association became possible in the first place (Chapter 5);

b) how it developed over the time (Chapter 6);

2) To examine the implications of this relationship in terms of archaeological knowledge and its impact upon current perceptions of the site. Despite a relatively long initial phase of stability, the relationship between *Missione* and the site of Tas-Silġ has been unsettled and controversial. It is not surprising that one of the most disputed controversies revolves precisely around the privileged position acquired by Italian archaeology on a Maltese site. Archaeology by foreigners is always a delicate business and particularly so in countries with an important colonial past. The research aims to explore the fragile balance between the Italian connection to Tas-Silġ and the Maltese struggle to set up a post-colonial archaeology. To unpack this perspective the study examines:

a) the extent to which Tas-Silġ can be regarded as an Italian construct (Chapters 6 and 7);

b) how this control has been backed, negotiated and challenged in the host country (Chapters 7 and 8)

c) the modes of interactions between Tas-Silġ as professional bounded territory detached from the surroundings and the outside, and the extent to which it is possible to establish a correlation between physical and intellectual dislocation (Chapter 8).

1.5 Rationale of this study

This research does not offer solutions and resists the temptation to project its outcomes into the future. Its scope is ambitious in its

simplicity: it wants to understand the making up of the Tas-Silġ archaeological site and in doing so it sets up a rigorous and original investigation into the ingredients of this making. In unpacking the situated complexity of this materialization process, it also addresses crucial issues related on nature and impact of making archaeology abroad, which are of relevance to any archaeologist involved in research projects overseas.

A very simple recipe to approach the Tas-Silġ site is presented in this research. Instead of taking for granted its identity as an archaeological site and building an analysis from this common assumption, this research takes a closer look inside the making of the archaeological entity.

The informative and transformative value of this kind research into the making of archaeological sites might support the foundation of new interpretative paths on their meanings when it comes to management issues.

This study makes an important contribution to the debate about the politics of archaeology and the development of the archaeological discipline in Malta. It offers insights into the circumstances that have informed the discipline since the closing chapter of Malta's colonial history. In particular, the study sheds new light on the development of the archaeological discipline during the process of nation-state building, the process of decolonisation, and the long journey toward full archaeological self-determination that overcomes traditional patterns of outside control of the discipline.

On a larger scale, this research aims to contribute to the debate about the notion of making archaeology abroad, which is central to the

question on how foreign archaeology fits with the host country, and the crafting of its collective national past.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The research material is split in 9 chapters, including the present one.

Chapter 2 (Making Archaeology in Tas-Silġ: a theoretical framework) surveys theoretical debates related to key concerns of this research. It covers issues related 1) to the material and intellectual construction of the archaeological knowledge; and 2) to the implications of archaeological practice in foreign countries burdened by histories of colonial subjections.

Chapter 3 (Methodology) sets out the methodology and methods used in this study. An in-depth single-case approach is adopted to unfold the collective process that shaped the physical and conceptual identity of the archaeological site of Tas-Silġ and of the entities involved in its making.

Chapter 4 (Tas-Silġ site: an archaeological retrospective) outlines the main stages of the archaeological investigations in Tas-Silġ and most relevant interpretative outcomes.

The detailed analysis develops throughout Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8. Chapter 5 (Polarized Archaeologies: Prehistory versus History) investigates archaeological and political preconditions of the *Missione* involvement in Tas-Silġ. Chapter 6 (Making Archaeology and Shaping a Past) unfolds the 'making archaeology' in Tas-Silġ by the *Missione* and the reasons of their long-lasting association. Chapter 7 (Challenging Italian Control) discusses the relevance of the association between the *Missione* and Tas-Silġ in the context of Maltese post-colonial archaeology. Chapter 8 (Tas-Silġ: an Island within the Island) explores how the physical landscape of the site relates to the archaeological

investigations and assesses the impact of physical and intellectual dislocation on research activities and on the perception of the archaeological entity.

The outcomes of the analysis in chapters 5-8 underpin the final discussion of Chapter 9 (Conclusions). Here concluding arguments on the meanings and consequences of Italian archaeology at Tas-Silġ are brought out and wider implications for foreign archaeology in decolonised countries are presented.

Chapter 2 Making Archaeology in Tas-Silġ: a theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

This chapter looks into the main conceptual concerns that inform this research and articulates the complexity of archaeological knowledge by investigating:

2.2 The collective mechanisms of construction of scientific facts.

2.3 The displaced sites where this knowledge is shaped. This section also explores crucial issues about the material dimension of making archaeology. Here the discussion develops around relational and intrinsic properties of things in archaeology.

2.4 How archaeologists position themselves and are positioned by other entities in the collective and displaced process of knowledge production.

2.5 Key strands of the debate on the situated effects of making archaeology.

The chapter finishes with a concluding section (2.6) drawing together these issues and how they frame the research project.

2.2 The construction of archaeological knowledge

The work of Bruno Latour (1987; 2004; 2005) is major source of ideas in developing this research's argument on the construction of archaeological knowledge. He has extensively researched the making of scientific facts and has distinguished between two domains of scientific knowledge: on the one hand 'Science in the Making' and on the other 'Ready Made Science' (Latour 1987, 1-17). 'Ready Made Science' is the domain of routine and cold matters of fact, which are presented as indisputable scientific knowledge in the public debate. Latour effectively uses the concept of black box borrowed by cyberneticians to describe the

layout of this type of knowledge: unknown inside the box and known only in terms of output. To open the boxes and understand their content, one should engage in controversies, dissent and renegotiate the facts (Latour 1987, 2-3, 131-141; 2005, 118; 2004, 63-64). To unlock the mechanisms that establish scientific knowledge as black boxes, Latour argues, it is necessary to investigate the whole gamut of ingredients that enter into the composition of facts. This is the domain of 'Science in the Making', a tortuous collective path that evolves in different shapes and through a variety of stages (Latour 2005).

Latour shows how a first uncertain and timid statement or prototype developed inside a laboratory can be constructed as an undisputable fact: it becomes 'stronger and stronger as time passes, as laboratories get equipped, articles published and new resources brought to bear on harder and harder controversies' (Latour 1987, 103). The fate of a scientific claim depends not only on 'lab coats', the scientists inside their laboratories, but also on others' behaviours and actions: 'To picture the task of someone who wishes to establish a fact, you have to imagine a chain of the thousands of people necessary to turn the first statement into a black box' (Latour 1987, 104). A scientific claim has the power to become a well-established fact when successfully produces a proliferation of associations and keeps controversies at bay. In the process some associations succeed whereas others fail and are discarded. Associations become stronger and survive as long as they are able to establish and maintain a community of interests. This means enrolling and controlling a long list of allies that believe in the claim, embrace and spread it. New ties are therefore created to interest people, to keep their interests alive and at the same time to direct their interests in a way to avoid transforming the original claim beyond recognition. This is because they do not simply transmit a claim but also translate it

according to their specific interests and goals. In this perspective, a fact is collectively composed and established inside and outside laboratories (Latour 1987, 103-144).

A similar process to the one just outlined can be followed in the making of archaeological facts. Any claim about a finding put forward during excavations is necessarily uncertain and provisional. To become an indisputable fact a long chain of successful associations need to be established and controversies settled. Protocols, instruments and strategies specific to each stage of archaeological knowledge process gradually translate the initial claim into stronger evidence. As mentioned above for scientific facts, an archaeological statement has no chance of making it without a network of allies beyond excavations, laboratories, research institutions and so on. In this perspective dissemination activities are crucial in establishing new strongholds and in securing new positions for archaeological facts. Beyond all the ethical concerns involved in inclusive policies in archaeology, we should not underestimate the impact of successful dissemination in strengthening the chain of consensus necessary for archaeological interpretations to get a position of power in the production of a common knowledge about the past. This research shows how poor and inconsistent dissemination can dangerously affect the establishment of certain interpretative outcomes (Chapter 6 and Chapter 7).

Needless to say that this does not mean that archaeological interpretations cannot be modified, questioned or challenged: this constantly happens in the construction of archaeological knowledge at Tas-Silġ, as in any other archaeological contexts. However, it can be argued that once an archaeological fact is shared and becomes a commonly used element of the construction of collective past, then it is

more difficult to unsettle it. The more archaeological facts are used to forge and negotiate collective identities (Meskell 1998; Meskell 2002; Meskell and Preucel 2004; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Lucas 2006; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1994; Gathercole *et al.* 1994; Smith 2006) the stronger become the glue that seals their black box.

More or less violent manifestations of dissent toward the system that support the establishment of certain archaeological facts are the most effective and direct means to destabilise them (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 342-345). However, in most of the cases, black boxes are not opened at all, they are either smashed or used as they are as instrument of dissent.

The only way to renegotiate core meanings of an archaeological interpretation that have reached such level of stability, without overthrowing existing political and social orders, is to open the black box and unravel its contents. The entire building process needs to be micro-excavated and deconstructed. This is precisely what this research aims to achieve for the Tas-Silġ site. In this case the task is facilitated by the circumstance that Tas-Silġ is to some extent still a warm fact: controversies and shifting in associations have hindered the closure of the black box. This offers a great advantage in the context of this analysis. Almost instantly, as the site is approached, the black box falls apart under the pressure of those controversies.

2.3 Knowledge factories and site materiality

An analysis of the collective mechanisms of making archaeology cannot ignore the associated materialization practice. The discussion can start by stating that archaeology is a displaced and non-linear materialization practice (Lucas 2012) and that objects are instrument and outcome of any archaeological system of knowledge.

Meanings of archaeological process have attracted a lot of scholarly interest (Lucas 2001a; 2001b; Lowenthal 2000; Matero 2005; Olivier 2001; Holtorf 2005). It is argued that archaeology not only brings back to light and studies material remains of the past, but it also assembles them in new associations, creates new narratives and opens previously unrecognised interpretative perspectives. In this perspective, making archaeology means not only retrieving and interpreting material culture from the past but also shaping its identity in the present (Shanks and Hodder 1995, 18-21). By the same token, 'We constitute the archaeological remains through our engagement with them and the tools we use in that engagement' (Lucas 2001b, 38). It follows that archaeology is not just a medium for getting specific perspectives on material pasts, but also a powerful tool for materializing them in the present.

Archaeology is a destructive construction in that it breaks down and displaces as much as it aggregates and assembles (Lucas 2012, 228-236; Johnson 2001). Any archaeological site is the result of those apparently competing practices and bears the marks of specific intervention strategies and interpretative paths. However, archaeological sites are not just material outcomes of a specific set of practices but are also part of the multi-sited 'factory' where archaeological knowledge takes shape. Archaeological sites are laboratories where this past is forged or, rather, following an ANT (Actor – Network Theory) perspective, they are part of the building site where this knowledge is manufactured (Latour 2005, 88-89, 118-119, 173-241; see on this also Lucas 2012). The making of archaeology is displaced and multi-scaled since it occurs in different places, at different times and involves ever new associations: areas selected to carry out excavations, workrooms where artefacts are collected and interpreted, laboratories where

scientific analyses take place; research institutions and libraries where interpretations are refined to target specific goals, and so on - the displaced sites where we make archaeology.

The knowledge process in archaeology produces a crucial disjuncture between what is left in-situ, the archaeological site, and what it is taken away to become main source of data in the interpretive narrative. Excavations break the material continuum of a deposit by identifying and separating artefacts and samples, and simultaneously assembling the field archive by sorting the finds and transferring discrete parts of the site's properties on to paper and other means through descriptions, drawings, photographs, etc. (Lucas 2012, 228-238). However, it is noted that the process of translation from the remains in the ground to the archive is rarely a one-off and linear process, that develops steadily from start to finish: indeed, if an end is actually possible. Conversely, it is in most of the cases a fluid process where site and archive recursively act on each other (Lucas 2012, 238-239): each stage of investigation produces a record that becomes the building blocks of subsequence stages of research; at the same time the results of a phase of research affects the way the site is further investigated. The site is source of archaeological knowledge up to the end of fieldwork activities. Then it is somehow discarded from the archaeological process (Lucas 2012, 244). In Tas-Silġ this disjuncture is evident with the end of the on site activities and the beginning of the post-excavation stage in the 1970s (Chapter 6). The decision to re-excavate the site after 30 years makes the process described above even more striking. This relates to the contrast between the material state of the site and the conceptual stability that the archaeological knowledge gradually acquired through the whole gamut of post-excavations activities. Archaeological narratives become stable through different means other than the materiality of the site: exhibits of

artefacts, scientific papers, talks, investigations in other places, history books, magazines, blogs, etc. However, when a decision is made to go back to a site a complex process of reconciliation is needed: this involves the interpretative narratives developed and preserved outside the site, the site itself and, not less significant, the new field archive produced by the new investigations.

It has been already considered how archaeologists build their authoritative position in interpreting the past through the mediation of material past. The mediating role of objects in the making of archaeology is here brought into focus. Any course of actions in archaeology consists in a network of human and object associations. Within this process both humans and objects mutually shaped each other. Acknowledging that objects can produce changes and make a difference in the course of human actions means that they have agency (Latour 2005, 63-86). An archaeological object does not simply transport unchanged the meanings given to it by its makers, but processes of translation always occur. The agency of a site is not limited to the mutual relationships with people involved in its investigation; it extends further through new associations and exchanges. This argues that 'objects overflow its makers' (Latour 2005, 85), that things can act outside human control defeating the common assumption that imposes 'some spurious asymmetry among human intentional action and a material world of casual relations' (Latour 2005, 76). Latour rejects *a priori* and abstract notions of society and suggests, instead, a 'performative' definition for it: collective and social are the result of people and things pairing and exchanging properties (Latour 2004). Gell (1998), in his anthropological theory of art, offers an interesting approach on object agency: he uses the concept of second-class agency to point to the capacity of things to affect people and mediate their actions. Agency is

relational and distributed, insofar as any entity is capable of it, and human action would be unthinkable outside material mutuality (Gell 1998; Olsen 2010, 135-36).

The reconfiguration of the relations between people and things and the idea of distributed agency have had a substantial impact on the archaeological debate, in particular in the context of object-centred approaches (Hodder 2011; 2012; Olsen 2010; 2012; Knappett 2012; Lucas 2012). This renewed attention on things is fundamentally a reaction to social constructivism theories, with their anthropocentric focus on representation and symbolism of material culture; in this perspective things passively embody social constituted meanings and are material medium to get to human actions and ideas (Knappett 2012, 189-190; Olsen 2010: 9-10; 21-38; Olsen 2011). Instead object-oriented approaches emphasize how things in their intrinsic properties are actively involved in the making of social collectives.

Many scholars agreed that people are ontologically dependent on things and that people and things affect each other along chains of interdependency (Hodder 2011; 2012; Olsen 2012; Olsen *et al.* 2012). However, debate on the properties of things' is contentious; to what level is it possible to take the notion of things autonomy and material agency (cf. Lucas 2012, 157-168; Knappett 2012)? In many research perspectives materiality is relational, in that enables or constrains things agency in chains of interdependency with other things and people (Hodder 2011; 2012). Any man-made thing is dependent on people who make it, use it, repair it, discard it, and on other things used to perform those actions; no less relevant, material qualities and the changeable nature of the object interact with those actors in enabling certain tasks and achieving certain outcomes (Hodder 2011, 158-161). Bringing

examples from Çatalhöyük Neolithic settlement Hodder (2011, 161-162) argues that things 'entrapped people in long-term relationships of material investment, care and maintenance – people became entangled and domesticated by things'. This statement can be easily applied to the long-term association between the *Missione* and Tas-Silġ; in particular in the research project inaugurated in the 1990s it is clear how the site entrapped the *Missione* in articulated associations around research and conservation issues (6.5).

A somewhat different argument comes from the movement on symmetrical archaeology (Shanks 2007; Olsen 2010; 2012; Olsen *et al.*, 2012; Webmoor 2007; Witmore 2007): while aligning to contextual and relational perspectives in what concerns the symmetry between people and objects, it calls for attention to the intrinsic properties of things. Symmetrical archaeology is at pains to show that 'things exist, act, and affect one another apart from any human relations, whether or not this interaction eventually also affects human life' (Olsen *et al. 2012,* 10).

The movement also argues that material pasts do not depend solely on human selection and engagement but they are actually 'co-produced' by a variety of agencies entrenched in multi-temporal sets of relations. Archaeologists need to be aware of those hybridized conditions that produced the archaeological record (Olsen 2012, 216-218; Olsen *et al.* 2012, 8-10; 137-156). It follows that things are meaningful and valuable, not just as outcome of cultural processes and activities that attach specific identities, but also by virtue of their unique, inherent qualities; those properties are neither accidental nor derive from the position of things in a network (Olsen 2010, 151-157; Olsen 2012, 219; Olsen *et al.* 2012, 197-209). This also brings some important ethical implications. Heritage practitioners have the professional imperative to

approach the symmetrically relational and intrinsic qualities of things: they should extend the care and attentiveness they show to identity and symbolic matters to the integrity and individuality of material pasts; they should acknowledge the ability of things to act on their own formation and on us outside human intentionality and action (Olsen 2010, 151-174; Olsen 2012; Olsen *et al.* 2012, 200-202). It can be argued, however, that without this entire theoretical detour many archaeological practitioners are precisely at pains to reach this sort of balance in their practice.

In its quest for a fair treatment of the ontological integrity and individuality of things, symmetrical archaeology explores also a specific set of circumstances: breakdown, interruption, abandonment and decay are all powerful indicator of materiality (cf. Knappett 2012, 193-195; Olsen 2010, 73; 162-173). People become aware of the intrinsic complexity of things when some sort of disruptive circumstance modifies otherwise stable associations and when things age, degrade and survive in residual form (Olsen 2010, 71-74). Processes of abandonment and ruination reveal aspect of materiality and meanings of things previously taken for granted. They generate a new awareness and expose the limits of habitual systems of knowledge (cf. Olsen 2010, 166-172). Tas-Silġ wonderfully epitomises this kind of material agency. In the degrading state endured after the 1960s the site exposed contradictions and limits of the archaeological system of knowledge produced by the first *Missione* (6.4; 8.3).

2.4 Archaeological discipline

In the above sections, the complexity of knowledge centres in archaeology have been considered; in particular the discussion has focused on the disjuncture between what it is immovable and left behind, the site, and what is taken away and displaced.

Another important issue in the above discussions is that making archaeology overflows professional boundaries of archaeology; however, any archaeological site has a lot to do with this well-established discipline that studies the past through material evidence (Olsen 2011; Lucas 2012).

Claiming that archaeologists have a leading role in interpreting material pasts unearthed and analysed by archaeological means makes perfect sense as the disciplinary boundaries of their commitment are clearly defined. Archaeologists do the job they are training for, following specific protocols and practices (Hodder 2003, 24-25). One might argue at this point what does it mean to be an archaeologist? The theme of professionalism has become a lively debate, in particular in connection with the steady growth of community archaeology and archaeological ethnography. For the purpose of this discussion, however, an archaeologist is everyone that applies a specific set of practices and methodologies to the study of material pasts.

Stating that archaeologists have direct access to the past is a completely different matter and, as such, it cannot be accepted. It can be observed, however, that archaeological practitioners are often in the position of generating accounts that reach the status of indisputable evidence about the past. This happens in particular if the chain of associations generated by professional engagement with material past is longer and stronger than others. Acknowledging this asymmetry is crucial to understand how archaeologists position themselves and are positioned by other entities in the collective process of knowledge production. Briefly, archaeologists through the mediation of material past, specific instruments and protocols shape their interpretation of the past and through this involvement they are shaped as faithful interpreters of the past. Any discipline ‘is at once extending the range of entities at

work in the world and actively participating in transforming some of them into faithful and stable intermediaries' (Latour 2005, 257).

In adapting such awareness to this study it can be claimed that archaeological practitioners participate in a collective mechanism that is powerful enough to impose this interpretation of the past as building block of a common heritage. As Latour effectively puts it, there is a 'direct relationship between the size of the outside recruitment of resources and the amount of work that can be done on the inside' (Latour 1987, 152). Archaeologists can do their job when they are fully dependent and aligned with the interests of many others people (Latour 1987, 157-158). It is a collective mobilization of resources and a constant negotiation of associations between inside and outside that establish them as authoritative interpreters of the past. Public Archaeology is the first research perspective in archaeology that has acknowledged the crucial role of outside recources in the definition of the discipline (Schadla-Hall 2006; Merriman 2004). Without entering in the debate on what is meant by public (on this Merriman 2004), the underlying general assumption is that archaeology cannot be without archaeologists and at the same time archaeologists are by no means alone in making archaeology and in defining their role.

Although archaeologists often become official spokespersons of material past, it is crucial 'to entertain serious but not definitive doubts about their capacity to speak in the name of those they represent [namely the material past]' (Latour 2004, 65). This perspective ensures a space for negotiation on the role of archaeologists and on their interpretations of the past and links to the notion of truthfulness in archaeology. This concept, it is noted, is related to the reliability of an archaeological process and of its interpretative outcomes and is not to be confused with truth as the most acurate and honest account is not

necessary true (Cooper 2006). The fragmented and residual nature of the archaeological record makes this issue of reliability an ever-pressing ethical concern (for a discussion on total record in archaeology Lucas 2012, 18-73).

The above discussion leads to the conclusion that the archaeological community does not have any intrinsic power to impose their interpretations of the past; however it is often the case that its interpretative outcomes are used in the construction of official narratives about the past and this comes at the expense of alternative approaches. This brings into focus the debate on multivocality and archaeological/non-archaeological narratives (among others Schadla-Hall 2006; Meskell 2002; Grima 2002) that will be developed in the following section in relation to key concerns about archaeology abroad and postcolonial archaeologies.

2.5 Foreigner and postcolonial archaeologies

The issue of competing stances on material pasts is extremely complex and it can be approached from very different perspectives. Crucial is the underlying tension between universal and global stances, which underpin archaeology as scientific discipline, and an ever-stronger attention to local cultural and identity claims (Gosden 2012). Generally speaking the archaeological community is nowadays at pains to overcome this tension: it is indeed increasingly interested in the social-political implications of its work and is committed to more inclusive practices and interpretations of the past; decades of research in the field of social archaeology has greatly helped in spreading this awareness (among others Hodder 2000; Holtorf 2000; Meskell 1998; Meskell 2002; Meskell and Preucel 2004; Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Lucas 2006; Gathercole and Lowenthal 1994; Gathercole *et al.* 1994; Smith

2004; Smith 2006; Schadla-Hall 2006; Grima 2002) insofar as it has become an ethical imperative for a growing number of professionals to address the situated effects of their work in terms of self-determination rights, identity and political struggles (Scarre and Scarre 2006; Vitelli 1996; Zimmerman *et al.* 2003; Meskell 2012). There is broad consensus nowadays that archaeology should be assessed not only on strictly scientific parameters but also in terms of its inclusiveness and readiness to accommodate social and ethical concerns that can derived from the situated effects of their work (Meskell 2012; Horning 2010).

A specific strand of this debate, which is of relevance to this study, deals with the link between politics and archaeology. The use of archaeology narratives to promote, legitimize and reinforce political ideologies, interests and actions has a long history of studies (Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998). The involvement of archaeology in processes of political legitimization has been studied firstly in connection to European nationalisms (Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996) and has been then explored on a global and contemporary perspective (among the others Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998). This theme of the political manipulation of archaeology has not lost its scholarly appeal, yet there is a general call for a less determinist and more cautious approach to it (Meskell 2012). The role of archaeological discipline in shaping national, regional and local histories is necessarily situated and any attempt to assess it against monolithic, universal parameters is at least problematic; the circumstances of every encounter are different and produce very different outcomes (Meskell 2012, 230-232; on Spanish archaeology see Díaz-Andreu 2010). Archaeological materiality and narratives certainly play a crucial role in the construction of certain collective identities, often at the expense of others, and this study confirms aspects of this paradigm. However this

study also shows that specific and nuanced conditions of the archaeology in Tas-Silġ can be revealed only unpacking its 'micro-politics' as Meskell (2012, 236) puts it.

The same focused attention is necessary to unravel the implications of the long-term Italian engagement on Tas-Silġ against Maltese political and archaeological decolonization. To get a sense of this complexity it can be claimed that the Italianate of the archaeology in Tas-Silġ is by no means uncontroversial. However, it cannot be explained by binary categories of domination/resistance, locals/foreigners, colonial/postcolonial although those elements have all a role in defining this contested terrain.

To set a theoretical ground to this key concern some strands of the current debate on postcolonial archaeologies need to be addressed. Due to the specific circumstances of the investigations in Tas-Silġ the largely disregarded issue of making archaeology abroad also deserves some consideration. Debates on postcolonial and foreigner archaeologies clearly share a common preoccupation with issues of access, control, and interpretation of material pasts by discrete groups in a position of power; in this sense the line between the two is blurred, however they should not be confused.

This discussion can start by reporting a general lack of scholarly attention to the theme of archaeology abroad, which is crucial to this study. It is noteworthy that this topic is often treated as sub-category of colonialism; the modes of archaeological knowledge adopted by foreign teams, it is suggested, mirror colonial strategies of appropriation and control of material pasts in colonized territories (Gosden 2004; González-Ruibal 2010; Hodder 2003). In this respect is particularly inspiring the instrumental use of the word cooperation to justify archaeological projects abroad (González-Ruibal 2010, 43-44).

As a humanitarian gesture archaeologists help to uncover other countries' material pasts, echoing colonial paradigms of external control. It has been noticed that based on this principle of cooperation archaeologists find it easy to work in former colonial territories thanks to the political, economic and cultural ties still existing with the colonial metropolises (González-Ruibal 2010, 43-44). UK-based archaeological projects in Malta can equate with this paradigm; conversely the circumstances of an Italian-based team in Tas-Silġ cannot fit in strictly colonial parameters, as Malta has never been an Italian colony. However a well-established political and cultural proximity of a large section of Maltese population with Italy made the narrative of cooperation an effective tool to direct the politics of archaeology on specific paths.

If one wants to look into the issue of archaeological projects abroad that fall outside patterns of colonial power-relations the debate is very limited. The issue is generally presented in terms of Western research teams that work in other (non-Western) countries with little or no concern for the impact of their activities on the local communities (Hodder 2003; Bernbeck and Pollock 2004). In particular, Bernbeck and Pollock (2004) scrutinize two different traditions of foreign archaeology in the Middle East. They observe that usually European and American teams have different approaches, research methods and objectives (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 339-340). In their analysis, the 'Americanist' tradition of studies usually focuses on comparative studies in different regions, which involve short-term projects and small amount of fieldwork. Europeans, on the contrary, adopt an in-depth, historical approach to the study of the past. They usually focus on a single site, which is extensively investigated (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 338-339). They do not set specific targets but 'are dedicated to long-term, slow accumulations of detailed knowledge.' (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004,

340). In this perspective the accumulation of data is an instrument of power: 'knowledge serves as a means to preserve power' and to reinforce a sort of 'esoteric wisdom' in professional teams (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 339). Expensively produced volumes serve the same purpose: they establish knowledge for its own sake (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 340).

These in-depth and long-lasting investigations enable European projects to develop more solid relationships with local people. It is common for professionals to learn local languages and for members of local communities to be involved on a regular basis in the project as common workers, and to give logistical support to professional activities (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 341-342).

In general terms, the description of European projects in the Middle East matches the circumstances of Italian Expedition in Malta, with a striking similarity, as this study shows in Chapter 5. However, it is a pity that the paper does not substantiate its powerful claims with a detailed analysis on the mechanisms that established those archaeological expeditions as full-blown participants in the making of the official past of the region. It also offers the misleading picture of a single European approach to archaeology, which is not of use to unpack the micro-politics of archaeological practice specific to each circumstance.

If the situated complexity of archaeological projects abroad is generally overlooked in the literature, the theme of colonial/postcolonial archaeology has been extremely popular and quite rightly so. The amount of material written on this topic is as vast and differentiated as the variety of colonial experiences registered in history. This is not the place to present every strand on this topic, however for the sake of clarity it is important to introduce some distinctive traits of postcolonial

studies in archaeology. Postcolonial archaeologies can be broadly divided in two macro-areas: 1) the one that investigates colonial contexts of the past and often challenges mainstream and traditional interpretations of those encounters (see Van Dommelen 1997; 1998) 2) the one that focuses on the relationship between archaeological discipline and colonialism and on archaeological practice in decolonized contexts (Gosden 2012; Van Dommelen 2011). Although both perspectives could be fruitfully applied to the site of Tas-Silġ, this research mainly follows the latter in investigating the contested circumstances of the politics of fieldwork and knowledge production in Tas-Silġ.

Quoting Gosden (2012, 255) 'post-colonial archaeology is an attempt to understand and work the complex effects of colonialism.' It is argued that postcolonial archaeology it is not only about addressing material, intellectual and economic effects of past colonial experiences but also to work toward forms of postcolonial practices in archaeology, which subvert and challenge colonial imbalances and *status quo* (Gosden 2012, 251-254). In this perspective postcolonial archaeology has often challenged scientific archaeological approaches and narratives to assert local/indigenous claims and restore subaltern systems of knowledge (Van Dommelen 2006; Gosden 2012). This relation between archaeological discipline and contemporary decolonization is by far the most prolific field of research within the broad context of postcolonial studies in archaeology (see Lydon and Rizvi 2010; Liebmann and Rizvi 2008). The underlying assumption here is that archaeological discipline was instrumental to establish and maintain European colonial empires, and that this involvement needs to be properly addressed in order to decolonize the discipline (Van Dommelen 2006; Lydon and Rizvi 2010, 17-33; Preucel and Mrozowski 2010; Liebmann 2008). Critical to this

process of decolonization is the balance between Western archaeological and non-Western indigenous systems of knowledge and interpretative frameworks (Nakata and David 2010; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012). Similar concerns have informed some debates within Europe. In this context it can be noticed, however, a rather simplistic use of the notion of colonialism to define any act of incorporation of minorities into modern nation-states (González-Ruibal 2010, 42-43). It follows that archaeology becomes an instrument of colonial dispossession and marginalization, being usually a state-sponsored practice. When applied to European contexts also notions of native and indigenous show their ambiguity and ideological implications; they are indeed variably used to define either groups that are marginalized by archaeological narratives (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2012, 278-280) or the powerful majority, which identifies with official archaeological interpretations and constructs as others new comers and immigrants (Willems 2009, 652-53; Holtorf 2009). This research cautiously avoids all together the use of those politically charged notions. By the same token in the context of this work colonialism and nationalism are approached as separated, yet intertwined domains.

More generally this research resists the temptation to incorporate global postcolonial paradigms to the study of Tas-Silġ; instead it welcomes the perspectives of those pieces of writing that stand out for the attentive analysis on the situated conditions of postcolonial archaeology away from the essentialism of mainstream postcolonial discourse (Horning 2010; Gullapalli 2008). In particular the work of Gullapalli (2008) on postcolonial archaeology in India is a precious source of inspiration on the complexity and heterogeneity of the process of archaeological decolonisation. On European soil Horning (2010) critically assesses essentialist approaches to the competing identities in

Northern Ireland and envisages the potential for archaeology to reconcile and heal.

Those types of analysis stem from the widely accepted awareness that colonial enterprise is a fragmented and fluid encounter where one cannot single out in a definite and stable way oppressor/ colonial state, on the one hand, and victim/colonized other, on the other hand (Gosden 2001; 2004; Van Dommelen 2006). Instead of this political and ideological charged dichotomy the dynamics between colonizers and colonized are evolving and shaped by specific power relations, which are rarely plain and predictable in their development (Gosden 2012, 256).

In particular the participation of local elites in negotiating colonial frameworks is a feature shared by many colonial territories. It follows that in it is not easy to distinguish a political and intellectual world of colonized and colonizers. In India, for instance, elite locals actively engaged with colonial rulers to acquire a position of relative power within Indian population and also to tailor the Indian nationalist movement on Western representations of modernity (Gallupalli 2010, 37). Similarly archaeology stems from the complexity of the interaction between colonial authorities and local intellectual establishment. This emerging discipline however was not simply a colonial endeavour for the substantial impact of local archaeologists and their understanding of material pasts and, at the same time, it was necessarily imbued with colonial interests and approaches (Gallupalli 2010, 42-43). It was, quoting Gosden (2012, 259) ‘a complex mixture of colonial and not-quite-colonial’ elements. Within the context of political independence and cultural decolonisation this heterogeneous colonial legacy still affects Indian archaeology. It is noticable that contemporary

archaeology, while it has successfully countered colonial narratives and representations of the Indian past, still moves according to Western/British disciplinary paradigms (Gallupalli 2008, 43-45).

Another interesting example on how colonial apparatuses translate and persist in formally decolonized territories is the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. It is argued that foreign research projects were colonial in attitude under British rule; while conversely more recently the Department of Antiquities has involved international teams on new post-colonial terms (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998). In general terms, however, the 1960s process of decolonisation in Cyprus appears to 'set the stage for neo-colonialism rather than postcolonialism' (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998, 22), in which independence meant at first an attempt 'to negotiate the ideological and material structures of power established under British imperialism' (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998, 23). In this perspective, the colonial system of power is not dismantled or discontinued, but transferred into a new political framework. However, this process necessarily implies some forms of negotiation and translation of those structures to accommodate interests and needs of the emerging political and cultural entity. In their articulation and scope they overcome the colonial framework and in that sense they are post-colonial.

Against this theoretical background, this research explores the situated circumstances of archaeology in Tas-Silġ, and draws out the complexities of these debates.

2.6 Conclusions

This chapter sets out some of the key theoretical issues that frame this study; they can be summarized as follows:

1) Making archaeology is a collective and displaced series of processes (2.2);
2) That these processes involve interactions between people and objects (2.3);
3) Within these processes archaeological knowledge is shaped, and archaeological professionals are established, as spokespersons of the past through this engagement with the material past (2.2; 2.4);
4) Archaeological sites are divorced from archaeological knowledge in a crucial paradox of the archaeological process (2.3);

The circumstances of foreign research, in a former colonial country, are central to current debates on the nature of archaeological projects abroad, and on the meaning of postcolonial archaeology (2.5).

Chapter 3 **Methodology**

3.1 Rationale

This study looks into the making of the Tas-Silġ site. Resting at the edge of the archaeological discourse, it addresses the collective process that has established Tas-Silġ as one of the most remarkable archaeological sites in Malta. In doing so, it investigates the circular mechanisms that shape the identity of the site and of the entities involved in the process. This is carried out by adopting a qualitative approach, which until recently has been largely marginalized by the existing literature about the site.

Constructing representations of social life lies at the core of social research. It involves a 'systematic interplay between ideas and evidence' (Ragin 1994, *xii*) where ideas are the theory underpinning the research and evidence is the data collected throughout the research to confirm, revise or challenge initial propositions (Ragin 1994, 6-9; 14-17; 55-57). The present account of Tas-Silġ stems from the dialogical encounter between the research conceptual framework and qualitative evidence obtained through a target data collection that encompasses archival research and different formats of interviews. This research therefore combines deductive and inductive processes. Although it follows a theory-before-research line where deduction is the predominant approach, the findings inductively extend and refine the initial hypothesis, opening up new interpretative paths (Ragin 1994, 45-47; Miles and Huberman 1994, 17-18).

The research conceptual framework encompasses a critical review of the main theoretical concerns about making archaeology and foreign and postcolonial archaeologies (Chapter 2) and, no less relevantly, a set of ideas based on my first-hand knowledge and

experience (Chapter 1). With regard to this latter, I examine a process where I was directly involved as archaeologist and in this sense, I am a participant observer of the process under investigation. However, the long term and deeply embedded nature of my engagement can be rarely achieved in participatory processes built on purpose during the research and affected by specific time constrains. It is therefore a major point of strength, as it ensures a substantial understanding of the process and gives credibility to the account.

This role of research - actor is all intertwined in this thick textured account on the making of the Tas-Silġ site. By definition this research is subjective and partial and it would be pointless to attempt an objective bird's eye view of the phenomenon.

A component of subjectivity informs initial concepts and ideas as well as research goals, strategies and the interpretative process (Berg 2007, 179-182). Quite importantly, this element also underpins segments of the analysis not directly controlled by the researcher as in the data collection, where the majority of those who were interviewed were well aware of my dual identity, both as researcher at a British institution and until relatively recently, an active member of the Italian expedition. This circumstance affected the interview process and outcomes in many ways (3.3.3). These and similar dynamics are constantly at work in this research: identifying them is crucial to understand how researcher and actors interacts in the construction of this account (Latour 2005, 32).

Acknowledging these elements of subjectivity contributes to setting realistic targets in terms of the reliability and validity of the research. Instead of claiming unattainable principles of repeatability and objective truth, this research strives to meet key criteria of transparency, accuracy and honesty throughout the investigation process.

The rationale behind the research is set out and the methodological parameters are articulated in terms of research objectives, collection of evidence, identification of themes and their interpretation. To add to the credibility of the findings, all the interview recordings are faithfully transcribed, the reference to the exact source for archival material is always provided and raw data from the above sources are employed to support the analysis and the interpretative process. The findings (external validity) of this research can be generalized: the ideas, concepts and issues that inform this study can provide crucial analytical tools to identify and investigate other cases shaped by similar social and historical dynamics (Berg 2007, 295-296).

This study fully complies with current UCL guidelines and Codes of Practice regarding social researches. It has obtained approval from the UCL Research Ethics Committee (Project ID Number 1554/001) and the UCL Data Protection Officer (Data Protection Registration Number: Z6364106/2008/6/29). The UCL Risk Assessment Procedures have been duly followed in setting up the fieldworks and, in compliance with these, every necessary precaution was taken during interviews including specific strategies for handling risk situations.

3.2 Case-Study design: units of analysis and context

Tas-Silġ is investigated using a case study method (Berg 2007, 283-302). It is believed that a within-case analysis is required to unveil the complexity of factors that have shaped this entity. This approach is intended to uncover intrinsic features, nuances, and latent aspects of this single case. More broadly the informative and transformative power of this rich textual account prompts the use of equally in-depth and nuanced analysis into the construction of any archaeological facts.

In order to gain a holistic picture of this case, this research targets three embedded subunits of analysis:

- The Process: the collective mechanisms that shape the identity of the site;
- The Players: the professionals and the entities involved in the process and shaped by this engagement;
- The Space: the site as material outcome of the interplay between process and players. Needless to say that in its layout, the site also plays an active role in defining the phenomenon.

The parameters of the case were set out in terms of temporal and spatial dimensions. The phenomenon occurred over a relatively long time span, which matches with the materialization process started in 1963. The research also took into consideration the decade prior to the beginning of the excavations, crucial for uncovering the preconditions and foundations of this process.

The concept that this archaeological entity is a secluded and authoritative construct sets a third boundary: the *Missione* as main social player in the process is extensively studied as a sub-case. Local institutions and organizations that in their relations with the *Missione* have had a role in shaping the case are also investigated. Both group and individual perspectives are considered.

3.3 Data collection: sources and sampling operations

3.3.1 Rationale

This study combines a variety of sources, employing the following data collection methods: 1) Individual interviews: semi-structured and opened/unstandardized; 2) Group interviews; 3) Archival research. This

variety of sources means that the same phenomenon is analysed from different, converging perspectives, ensuring therefore an in-depth contextual understanding of it and, quite importantly, strengthening the internal validity of the analysis (Berg 2007, 5-6).

In this study, each type of source purposely targeted specific analytical objectives. Such purposive strategy, however, did not preclude acquiring the same pieces of evidence from two or more types of sources. For instance, archival material was employed mainly to unveil political and cultural roots and macro mechanism of the archaeological process and to provide a historical framework. Narrations captured from the open interviews interplayed with archival material to open up to individual and alternative narratives on the same themes. They brought to life and critically re-told events, circumstances and processes described in official sources. In some cases, they integrated and filled documentary lacunae. Semi-structured and focus-group interviews unveil more specifically the contemporary dimension of the phenomenon although their insights on broader historical and cultural dimensions can also be extremely precious. What follows is a description of the sampling operations adopted for each source.

3.3.2 Archival records

In this study written documents are as important as interviews in providing essential data for the interpretation of Tas-Silġ. Contrary to interviews that are essentially intrusive techniques because they require some sort of intrusion in the interviewees' lives, archival measures are considered unobtrusive (Berg 2007, 239-241). I argue, however, that although they are non-intruding in terms of data collection strategies they can be as intrusive as other qualitative methods in terms of outcomes. Archival research deals with evidence either intentionally or

unintentionally left on paper in a recent past and as such these pieces of evidence can bring back to light sensitive matters, often forgotten. This process of recollection mostly affects the institutional and organizational levels, although individuals are involved as well.

In this project archival material provides access to historical, political and cultural aspects, which are crucial to the understanding of the Tas-Silġ phenomenon. It further unveils how the specific case fits into national cultural heritage policies and strategies. To achieve such goals, two different sampling strategies are adopted: 1) a systematic gathering of every piece of information related to the case; 2) a selection of evidence regarding the wider Maltese political and cultural context. Whereas the first sampling strategy is self-evident in its comprehensiveness, the second type involves a selection of enough information-rich data to critically reveal how the Maltese context frames the case. The size of this sample depends primarily on the researcher judgment and it is measured on a criterion of relevance to the case.

The documents used in this study belong to public and private collections and vary greatly in terms of format and language level. They are held in Malta, Italy and the UK as detailed below:

Italy

- Rome (Institute of Phoenician and Punic Studies – University of Rome 'La Sapienza') and Milan (Institute of Archaeology – Catholic University);
- Private collections of *Missione's* members;
- British School in Rome.

Malta

- Heritage Malta (HM);

- Superintendence (SCH);
- National Library;
- National Archives – Rabat;
- University of Malta.

United Kingdom

- Public Records Office – Kew

3.3.3 Interviews

Introduction

This study combined non-probability and purposive sample strategies in recruiting the participants. Non-probability sampling was adopted to locate subjects that represent larger groups. On occasions a small-scale chain strategy was used to identify some new cases with key-informants being deployed as go-betweens to reach information-rich subjects initially unknown to the researcher (Berg 2007, 39-45; Green and Thorogood 2004, 102-104; Miles and Huberman 1994, 27-29). This strategy appeared to be particularly useful for recruiting participants in group-interviews and in open-interviews with non-professionals. To give a practical example, after a week-long attempt to pierce the veil of scepticism that surrounds any outsider wondering around Marsaxlokk with paper, pen, camera and voice recorder, I gave up and asked for help to a friend and colleague of mine. He personally introduced me to his uncle Charlie, whose family has lived for generations in the village. This move was a success since Charlie was eager to help and directed me to everyone in the village that could have interesting information because of age, position in the community and because she or he was somehow

involved in the excavations. Without the mediation of persons like Charlie, it would have been an extremely difficult if not impossible task.

Figure 3-1: Charlie Abela and I (photograph by Davide Locatelli, October 2009).

A purposive sampling was adopted in the selection of individuals that have a special link with the case. It is fair to say that some sort of professional or personal connection to many participants ensured this phase to run smoothly. This circumstance not only facilitated the sampling operation but also had an impact on the interview dynamics: on the one hand, the participants approached the topics, developed and guided their narration knowing who they were talking to, and, on the other hand, I had the tools when needed to redirect the narration onto planned paths and to understand the meaning of specific narrative choices. This type of interaction is a key methodological feature in this study. Drawing from what discussed earlier in this chapter (3.1), I become agent in the process not only by virtue of my past involvement in the archaeological investigations but also by virtue of the set of connection that derive from this experience, later developed and expanded through this research.

With the exceptions of a couple of written interviews, all the interviews were fully audio-recorded and transcribed. The Italian material was translated into English only for the segments of text selected for the coding. As a general protocol, before each session the participants were provided with an Information Sheet (Appendix) and an Informed Consent Form (Appendix) to be signed and returned. In addition, each participant in the focus groups signed a copy of the Group Agreement for Maintaining Confidentiality (Appendix) (Berg 2007, 163-165).

Semi-standardized interviews

Heritage professionals who were involved to some degree in shaping Tas-Silġ, were sampled for this type of interview. Although the interview developed around a set of scheduled open-ended questions, specific content, language level, and order of the questions were adjusted during the interview in accordance with the professional affiliation of each informant and also according to where she/he led the discussion (Berg 2007, 93, 95-97).

The interviewees were asked to assess the work carried out by the *Missione* in Tas-Silġ and the nature of the relationship between the Italian expedition and Maltese institutions involved to some extent in the archaeological making of the site. The first question was used to test the perception of Tas-Silġ as archaeological fact. The questions scheduled for all interviews were as follows.

- In a few words, how would you define an entity like Tas-Silġ?
- Based upon your own experience, how would you assess the work carried out so far by the *Missione* in terms of A) archaeological research B) Conservation C) Interpretation and presentation?

- What issues have been neglected (by the *Missione*) that should have been addressed as priorities?
- Drawing a comparison with the Italian project, which are the major strengths and weaknesses of the project of the University of Malta?
- How would you define the relationship between *Missione* and University of Malta when the two projects co-existed?
- Why did a joint project never happen at Tas-Silġ similarly to the one involved in the investigations of Xagħra cemetery?
- How would you describe the relationship between *Missione* and Superintendence? Between *Missione* and HM?
- In your opinion has the relationship between the *Missione* and Tas-Silġ a future? Under what possible terms?

22 subjects who participated in the above interviews were recruited: 7 from the *Missione*, 6 from Tas-Silġ South and 9 from SCH and HM.

Open in-depth interviews

In contrast to semi-structured interviews, which specifically targeted the professional and official dimension of the phenomenon, open interviewing revealed the unofficial dimension, integrating, widening, and challenging the official version of the facts. At times open interviews filled documentary gaps offering the only available pieces of evidence on specific circumstances or events. By recalling and personally interpreting past events and circumstances, the narrators humanized official and authoritative accounts. In this perspective I became involved as key narrator as I put human faces and voices on generic and collective concepts of archaeology, heritage and past.

What was sought from this kind of data gathering was not just the reconstruction of facts but also the personal recollection of them.

Here narration was as important as hard facts and historical, personal and legendary narrative levels often coexist in fascinating combinations (Portelli 2006, 35-41).

In term of structure, those interviews were unstandardized. Basic ingredients were the lack of a scheduled set of questions and a great flexibility in adapting the interview to each specific circumstance (Berg 2007, 94-95). Each conversation was different and relied on the interaction between researcher and informant. This meant that while at times the very first question produced a long and detailed narration and the interaction between me and informant flowed steadily, on other occasions the conversation needed to be constantly revived by my intervention and the interaction lost the appeal of a spontaneous conservation.

Figure 3-2: Maria Pompei, one of the most precious informants (photograph by Anna Maria Rossi, November 2009)

The recruitment process was time consuming but generally successful: 8 informants were interviewed. A one-off interview was usually enough to cover every key issue, even if in a few cases follow-up conversations with the same informants were necessary. Venues also varied greatly: the interviews were conducted in both public and private spaces; some itinerant interviews were performed where the informant and I took a stroll through places relevant to the narration.

Focus-groups

The chain of thoughts generated by the group interaction is arguably the most valuable outcome of this kind of interview. The flow of ideas often brings the discussion on unexpected paths that are difficult to foresee at the outset and in this way new conceptual spaces are created where to test existing assumptions (Green and Thorogood 2004, 107-129).

As general guidelines used during group interviews, before each session every participant read and signed consent and information papers (Appendix). In addition to it, in the role of moderator, I explained the project's aims and how group interviews operate. A voice recorder was used for the entire length of the conversation. In terms of interview's process, I presented a first point to be discussed and the participants offered their views on it in turn, initiating an internal discussion. Every member of the group was encouraged to participate to the discussion and to express overtly his/her opinions. Once the conversation started I mainly observed and took notes. On occasions I intervened to animate the debate. However, I thought sensible to keep this occurrence to the minimum to not hinder the natural exchange of ideas between informants (Berg 2007, 149-162).

At the outset seven group interviews were planned. Out of this number only three were actually convened and only the data acquired

from the sessions with HM and the university students were used in the analysis. The original plan included sessions with heritage professionals, grouped by institutional affiliation (Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, Heritage Malta, ex-students of the Department of Classics and Archaeology – University of Malta involved in the excavations in Tas-Silġ).

Group interviews with teachers from local primary and secondary schools were also planned. With regard to this latter sample, it was possible to perform only one session with the history teachers of the Junior Lyceum in Zejtun, (for the purpose of which Maltese Ministry of Education granted a standard permission for researching in public schools on the 23 October 2009). The insights gained through this group interview would have been extremely valuable in particular in investigating how archaeological facts were used as a historical tool in education. However, a final decision was made to leave out this perspective altogether. This was motivated by the fact that the boundaries of the case shrank along the way to include only the chain of associations more closely related to the site and made mainly by heritage professionals.

With regard to the group interview planned at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage, I faced a highly critical attitude by some invited to participate in the interviews on the scientific value of this data gathering technique. As a result this group session did not take place.

Focusing on the successful sessions with heritage professionals, the topics brought up for discussion replicated more or less the content of semi-structured interviews (3.3.3). Notwithstanding

the common starting point, however, the way the discussion developed was significantly different due to group dynamic as mentioned above.

For the interview with archaeologists involved as students in Tas-Silġ South, the chain strategy adopted was to recruit 3 of the 4 participants. The session with HM was convened thanks to the mediation of one of the senior member of the staff, who also took part to the discussion. Each session lasted about an hour and was fully recorded. Putting side by side the two sessions convened, it is worthy to note that many of the participants in the HM group were also involved as students in Tas-Silġ South. As a consequence, the information gathered during both sessions was successfully cross-related to build a solid platform on the views of the then University students representing an important section of Maltese archaeological community.

3.4 Data management

3.4.1 Principles

The study employs a thematic approach to develop the analysis, according to the following criteria. The raw material is firstly assigned to themes and categories that derive from primary research objectives. For instance broad descriptive passages like events and actions related to the history of the excavations, but also instances of relationships between various players are labelled in this phase. By the same token the interview answers are coded at the question topic and at the interviewee. More interpretative concepts are also identified in this phase, like the role of the Italians in shaping the post-colonial identity of Maltese archaeology and the development of the politics of archaeology in Malta.

From this first deductive process and without assigning *apriori* categorisation a second level coding is performed. This in-depth

examination captures what lies behind the surface of general categories that stays largely unexplored or unknown in the first coding. Themes like knowledge production and knowledge sharing that become crucial in understanding certain power-relations in Tas-Silġ are identified only through this second coding run.

Major sources of unexpected themes that then become crucial in developing the account are the same interviews with well-known professionals. I asked their views, expecting certain answers based on categories defined at the outset. Often however they gave responses that I did not expect but that were directly affected by the way they related to the questions, to the research process and to my professional capacity. In addition to this approach, a specific strategy was adopted to generate further themes and concepts from the data. This involved at first the selection of few items in the format of whole interviews, documents or segments of them. The choice was made either on a level of details and acuteness of the insights or simply on the originality and marginality of the views. The rest of the data set was then analysed against those new thematic categories.

A further and crucial stage was the pattern coding that identified forms of association and connections across the coded passages (Miles and Huberman 1994, 57-72). In those pattern codes the interpretation of the phenomenon started to take shape: players were linked to actions under specific circumstances, social behaviours pointed at specific cultural and historical circumstances and individual perspectives emerged distinctively amid groups and organisations. In investigating how individuals related to larger entities, the analysis specifically looked at contrasting and marginal features. This encompassed everything, which did not conform to mainstream views and behaviours expressed by the group those individuals belong to. A

close examination of ideas and attitudes that deviate from standard challenged the same research hypotheses. In general terms by setting side by side conventional and marginal, new interpretative paths opened up, which aimed at a throrough understanding of the phenomenon in its nuanced and complex nature (Miles and Huberman 1994).

In terms of management tools, the study employed a combination of manual and computing approaches. All the data from interviews, casual conversations, and all the related field notes were investigated on a QDA (qualitative data analysis) software package (Nvivo 7). Archival sources were analysed manually and only a limited selection was linked to the software as external The evidence retrieved using those two techniques was, when needed, cross-related to interpret comprehensively the phenomenon of Tas-Silġ.

3.4.2 Nvivo7

A small Nvivo project was developed to organize and analyse the participants' opinions about crucial issues related to the *Missione*'s involvement in Tas-Silg. Although the software offers advanced interrogation and modelling options, this project interrogated the data using only basic query tools (Appendix). At first the material from interviews was coded at the questions to analise the various points of view on *Missione* activities (archaeological practice; conservation; dissemination; site interpretation - cross-reference); the same source was then coded at more interpretative concepts (colonial/postcolonial; break/continuity; knowledge sharing; knowledge transfer; *Missione* control). The great advantage of the Nvivo coding system is that code-and-retrieve operations are straightforward; this means that content from an interview can be fragmented to word level without compromising the

integrity of whole documents or the understanding of broader contextual features (Bazeley 2009).

In terms of conceptual architecture, Nvivo works around the qualitative concept of case (Bazeley 2009, 41-44). In this project every interview participant was a case and was assigned to a case node. This latter is the virtual container that gathers all the data related to a particular case: it comprises the references to the participant interview transcripts and, when applicable, to sections of group interviews or casual conversations, which express the views of that individual. All descriptive details (including demographic information, nationality, institutional role) are also attached to the case node as attributes for that case. Nodes are used not only to manage cases but are also and more importantly at the heart of its coding system. Quoting Bazeley (2009, 83) nodes are 'points at which concepts potentially branch out into a network of sub-concepts or dimensions'. Every concept or topic based on the research assumptions or generated throughout the analysis makes a node (Bazeley 2009, 15-16; 32-34; 66-73; 99-110).

Audio recorded groups and individual interviews were fully transcribed and formatted using Word, heading levels were set consistently throughout. Similarly, written interviews (email interviews) were formatted using the same heading styles. This provided a consistent structure to all sources and ensured that, once they were imported into the Nvivo project, headings and content could be easily retrieved and autocoded. Casual conversations were also transcribed using Word and imported as documents (Bazeley 2009, 43-58). The material in Italian was not translated to enable the coding process to capture the minute nuances provided in the original transcription.

3.5 Conclusions

This chapter has examined the research methodology utilised. It outlined the main design features and methods from data collection to interpretation of findings. It has illustrated how the research complies with core principles of quality without setting unrealistic targets.

This research deployed a case study research strategy based on a single-case design with embedded units of analysis. It relied on multiple sources of evidence, which ultimately converged to unveil intrinsic and contextual features of the Tas-Silġ phenomenon.

The analysis on the making of the Tas-Silġ site develops from Chapter 5 to Chapter 8. The data collected and managed according to the above criteria are embedded in the text to create a thick textured account. This textual account is substantiated by rich and multi-sourced documentary material and by the views of the various individuals in dialogue with the researcher. Their quotes are always used where relevant to develop the argument. To ensure anonymity, each individual is labelled with a two-figure code; one of the figures related to the following macro categories: *Missione*, Malta University, HM, SCH, and Marsaxlokk. In some cases the same individual could be associated to more than one entity; this type of information can be easily retrieved with a simple interrogation in the Nvivo project.

Chapter 4 The Tas-Silġ site: an archaeological retrospective

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of what makes Tas-Silġ an archaeological site and its most relevant outcomes in terms of archaeological interpretation. As one would reasonably expect, the presentation of these dimensions of the site derives for the most part from official archaeological narratives. Main data sources to construct this overview are official documents related to the investigations and the whole gamut of published material on the site, which gives a sense of the rich and challenging nature of this archaeological context.

The material is presented as a linear technical account that contrasts with the humanised story developed in the following chapters. This narrative clash is not casual and well serves the purpose of distinguishing between this section of objective facts (state-of-art knowledge about the millennia-long occupations of the hill) and the following sections where the controversial and fluid process of shaping those facts is unveiled. At the heart of this enquiry is the agency-driven making of the site even if not for a moment this research intends to minimize the importance of those archaeological facts. It simply wants to look behind the curtains and see them under a different light. Before that, however, the facts need to be presented and this is precisely what this chapter addresses. While the first section offers a summary of the history of the excavations, the second one gives an overview of the main archaeological findings from the site and within broader regional context.

4.2 Archaeological investigations

This section presents the materialization process of the site as performed by archaeological professionals. The main player in this process is the *Missione*. The *Missione* was set up in 1963 and under various circumstances it has maintained ties with the site until now. Between 1995 and 2002, the Department of Classics and Archaeology of the University of Malta excavated at Tas-Silġ. More recently, HM was directly involved in some watching briefs in relation to the westward extension of the site boundary (courtesy of HM).

The material below distinguishes three chronological phases (1960s, 1970s-80s, 1990s-2000s) that match the main turning points in the development of the research (Appendix).

4.2.1 1960s

The remains on the hill of Tas-Silġ had attracted the interest of local scholars and travellers since at least the 16th century (Bonanno and Frendo 2000, 70). However, the first comprehensive excavations at Tas-Silġ were part of an ambitious research programme set up by the Institute of Near-Eastern Studies in Rome with the full support of the Maltese Government. This programme provided for excavations to be carried out in parallel at three different sites on the Maltese Islands: Tas-Silġ, San Pawl Milqi and Ras Il-Wardjia.

The *Missione* started work at Tas-Silġ in October 1963. Since then and for the following seven years Italian teams extensively excavated the site. In terms of approach to the deposit, the team mainly adopted a non-stratigraphic strategy with the exception of a few stratigraphic soundings carried out mostly over the last years of excavations (Figure 4-1)(Ciasca 1965, 41-67; 1966, 25-46; 1967, 25-36; 1968, 17-30; 29-46; 1972, 19-24; 1973, 19-28. D'Andria 1973, 29-57).

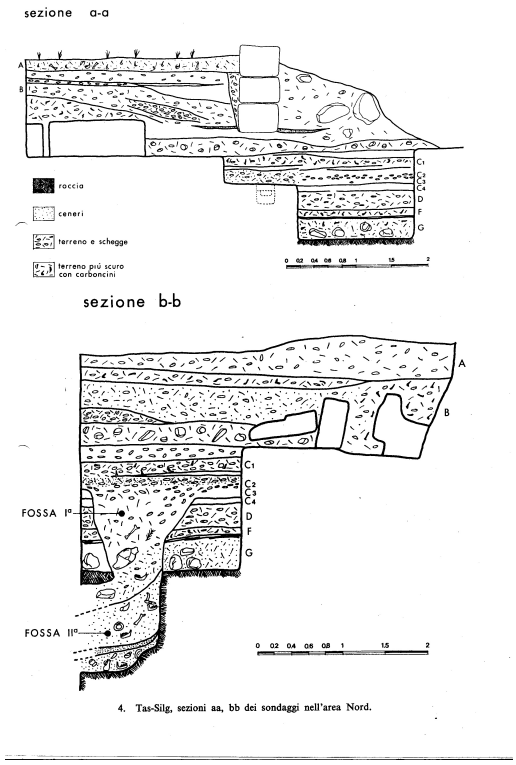

Figure 4-1: Stratigraphic sections from investigations in the North area (after Cagiano de Azevedo *et al.* 1973, *table 4*).

At first, a great number of trial trenches were opened on both side of the Zeijtun-Delimara road to assess the chronology and the extension of the archaeological area (Figure 4-2)(Ciasca 1964, 53-77).

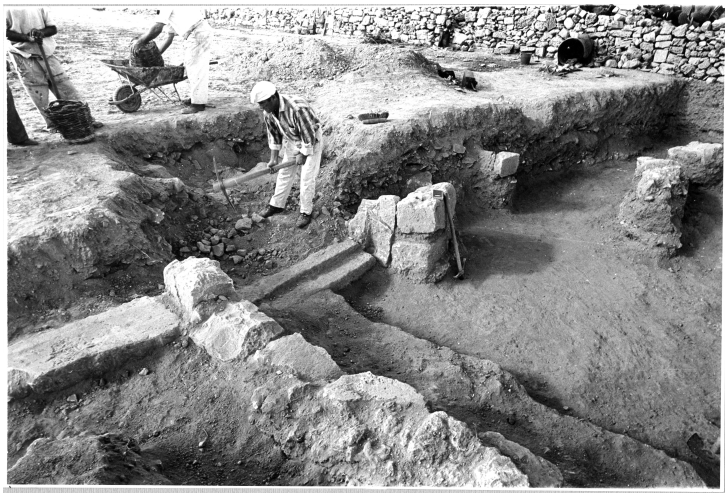

Figure 4-2: The *Missione's* first campaign (file 005 *fig*. 95 – reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

From the start of the second campaign, this investigation developed into a large-scale operation that in the course of a few years unveiled most of the site (Figure 4-3; Figure 4-4; Figure 4-5). Most of the efforts were directed towards understanding of the northern area, although the plots to the south of the Zejitun-Delimara road were investigated, albeit less consistently, between 1963 and 1964 and again between 1969 and 1970 (Caprino 1972, 31-46; 1973, 43-57).

Figure 4-3: 1965 campaign (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

Figure 4-4: 1965 campaign – North area with farm house on the background (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

The fast pace of interpretation was in line with the rate of excavation. Among the first year outcomes were the identification of the Punic and Roman sanctuary dedicated to Astarte and Hera/Juno, and the undisputable evidence of a multi-millennia occupation of the site. The link between the unearthed remains at Tas-Silġ and the famous sanctuary of Astarte in Malta made it possible to reject two widely accepted theories: one that located the Juno's sanctuary on the Birgu peninsula in the Grand Harbour and another that identified the remains at Tas-Silġ with the sanctuary of Melqart, the male God who occupied a place in the Punic Pantheon similar to that of Astarte. The site of Tas-Silġ was identified as such by cross-relating archaeological findings and ancient written sources. First and foremost Cicero mentioned the Maltese sanctuary in his accusation against *Verres*, governor of the Sicilian province between 73 and 71 BC. The Roman orator provided a touching account of the outrageous stealing of all precious ornaments and offerings from the sanctuary by the governor Verres (*In Verr.* II. 4, 103-104). Cicero claimed that until this unforgivable act the sanctuary had been universally regarded as inviolable because of its timeless sanctity. He also associated this sanctuary with the magnificent Heraion of Samos in the Aegean, which attracted worshippers from all over the Mediterranean (Cagiano 1964, 111-112; 1966, 130-131*)*.

Together with this remarkable finding that shaped the historic identity of the site, the first year investigations preliminarily assigned the deposit to four broad chronological and cultural horizons: Bronze Age, Punic, Roman, Byzantine. In this chronological sequence two long gaps were registered, between the Bronze Age and the Late Punic phase and another between the heyday of the Roman Empire and Byzantine times. Based on the undisputedly sacred nature of the site in Punic and Roman times together with the long-lived occupation sequence, the researchers

predicted they would discover evidence of a Christian place of worship above the Roman deposit (Cagiano 1964, 111-112; Ciasca 1964, 149-153).

The conclusions reached during the 1963 campaign guided the future of the studies. The investigation programme established in the following years was to ascertain how this sacred centre had developed over the millennia and to reduce the chronological lacunae registered in the occupation sequence (Cagiano de Azevedo *et al.*1965, Cagiano de Azevedo *et al.* 1966, Cagiano de Azevedo *et al*. 1967, Bozzi et al. 1968, Busuttil *et al*. 1969, Cagiano de Azevedo *et al.* 1972, Cagiano de Azevedo *et al*. 1973). In 1966 the structures of a megalithic temple and the core area of the *fanum Junonis* were fully unearthed. The excavators also claimed to have found unmistakable evidence of a Christian place of worship. The following year the investigations focused again on the hilltop, in particular on the area in front of the façade of the megalithic building. Here the excavations reached bedrock, revealing that the Neolithic building had been constructed on the very top of the hill and that the orientation of the main entrance matched that of the natural crest. Some extraordinary features of the historic sanctuary were unearthed and its unique layout over the centuries started to take shape. Moreover there were a number of structural elements that were dated to the Byzantine and Norman phases of the church thought to have been erected in the main courtyard of Juno's sanctuary. In 1968 research focussed on the Northwest ridge of the plateau and a complex series of open spaces associated with the historic sanctuary were unearthed along with arrangements dating to more recent periods.

In 1969 the *Missione* devoted all its resources into Tas-Silġ, as the investigations on the sites of Ras il-Wardija and San Pawl Milqi had terminated in 1967 and 1968 respectively (Ciasca 1969a, 1969b). This

meant that for the last two on-site campaigns the *Missione* was able to adopt a research strategy that included, for the first time, a systematic analysis of artefacts. The larger archaeological team also meant that on-site investigations could be carried out to the North and to the South of the Zejtun-Delimara road at the same time. In the northern enclosure, the research task was to gather further data on the central area of the hill top and to investigate the stratigraphic sequence of the site. This later objective was achieved by digging a deep trench to the north of the topmost plateau in an area free from structures where the deposit seemed well preserved. The data gathered between 1969 and 1970 appeared to be of paramount importance in drawing some general conclusions on occupation dynamics and the layouts of the site over the millennia. More precisely it was possible to establish a chronological sequence for the succession of building phases that dated from Prehistory to the arrival of the Normans in the 12th century (Ciasca 1972a, 1972b, 1973a, 1973b). An uninterrupted cultic destination of the site was thought to characterise the whole sequence of occupation. The hypothesis of a mosque built in the area of the Christian baptistery was also put forward (Cagiano 1972, 134).

Figure 4-5: 1969 campaign (*fig.* 012 reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

The *Missione* published eight detailed reports (*Rapporti preliminari)* that presented the vast body of data used to interpret the site in both archaeological and historical terms. These reports were issued yearly until 1969 (campaign 1968) and then the last two volumes were published with a couple of years delay in 1972 and 1973 respectively. This slowdown in the publication trend might be linked to an administrative restructuring that occurred in 1969 with the institution of the *Centro di Studi per la Civiltà Fenicia e Punica*. It may also have been a consequence of a general rethinking of the research in Malta: an in-depth and comprehensive study of the evidence from the excavations as it happened in actual terms with the end of the excavation season in 1971. The activities of the *Missione* are briefly presented in the archaeological section of the Museum Department Reports that in 1972

were included in the Reports of the Government Department (Report 1964,5; 1965, 4; 1968, 2; 1968a, 4-5; 1969, 7; 1970, 8; 1971, 5; R.G.D. 1972, 61).

Besides those professional and governmental channels of information, the 1960s excavations undoubtedly succeeded in capturing public attention. From the beginning the *Missione* activities were characterised by full media coverage: several articles were published in Maltese newspapers and magazines especially while excavation work was in progress. TV and radio broadcastings also followed the development of the research. Furthermore, the end of the each campaign was marked by at least one public lecture and a temporary free exhibition of the most representative findings at the National Museum in Valletta (Moscati 1966, 15; 1967, 15; Ciasca 1968a, 13; 1969a, 13; 1972a, 15; 1973a, 15; MUS 98/62; Times of Malta, 24 November 1964, 2). The beginning of the investigations received good coverage by the Italian press and state television. *L'Osservatore Romano*, the press organ of the Vatican, published a couple of well-documented articles by Cagiano on the important conclusions drawn after just one month of investigations at Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi (L'Osservatore Romano, 6 Dicembre 1963, 5; 11 Dicembre 1963). The RAI-TV filmed the excavations during the 1964 campaign to highlight a new archaeological frontier opened outside Italian national borders (OPM/EA/212/64; NAM, ME 35/63:69).

4.2.2 1970s-80s

In the 1970s a major shift occurred in the Tas-Silġ project with the end of the extensive excavations and the implementation of a new research agenda. The new season was planned as an intensive post-excavation study that combined data analysis of a wide range of artefacts and

graphic and photographic recording of the site. It goes without saying that at this stage, after almost a decade of extensive fieldwork, data processing was a major scientific requirement.

The work was carried out in the basement of the Monastery of Our Lady Tas-Silġ (MUS 22/63I: 32; MUS 22/63I: 78, 80, 82; MUS 22/63I: 139). This was where the vast majority of the material collected from the site had been stored since 1963. The most significant architectural features and pieces of sculpture had been stored at Mdina in the Vilhena Palace. Ever since the research commenced any objects that required special care, such as fine works of art and precious ornaments, were kept in the Museum's safe. In the 1980s the post-excavation effort came to an end and the material stored in the basement of the monastery was transferred to Bormla (Cospicua), to an area within the Cottonera lines. Some items stored at Mdina were moved to Cottonera at the beginning of the 1990s whilst the remaining ones were moved in 2003.

This research phase was characterised by a general lack of media coverage, although scientific debate on Tas-Silġ-related topics flourished in those years thanks to researchers both inside and outside the *Missione*. Leaving aside the broad and generalist approach of the preliminary reports, the *Missione* specifically tackled the Phoenician-Punic occupation. Thanks to this scholarly attention, the Phoenician sanctuary of Astarte in Malta achieved international scientific recognition. Antonia Ciasca, in particular, made a fundamental contribution in this sense. Among her many achievements during those years, her interpretation of the Phoenician temple (Figure 4-19) should be mentioned because it has become a crucial reference for any further analysis on the core area of the sanctuary and, broadly speaking, it offers food for thought on the settling process of the Phoenicians in the Maltese territories (Ciasca 1976-77, 162-172).

4.2.3 1990s-2000s

Missione

Ciasca first returned to Malta at the beginning of 1990s to set up the new warehouse at Cottonera with the assistance the Museums Department. This work was mainly logistic: it involved a general assessment of the storage conditions of the material and a preliminary arrangement of the boxes in accordance with their original inventory number. Much work on the material followed over the years and for this purpose a newborn *Missione* came to Malta for the first time in 1995. A small team from Italy had already started working at Cottonera. The diversity of the findings collected in the 1960s required the involvement of a number of specialists. Initially, the artefacts tackled were primarily Prehistoric and Phoenician-Punic; from 1996 onwards the work has involved the analysis of material from later contexts (MUS 22/63I: 267).

The years 1995-1996 marked a real turning point in the development of the research. In 1995 together with the usual campaign at Cottonera, a multi-context plan of the whole site of Tas-Silġ, known as the Mitchell plan after the architect in charge of surveying the site, was laid out (Figure 4-6) (MUS 22/63 II: 275).

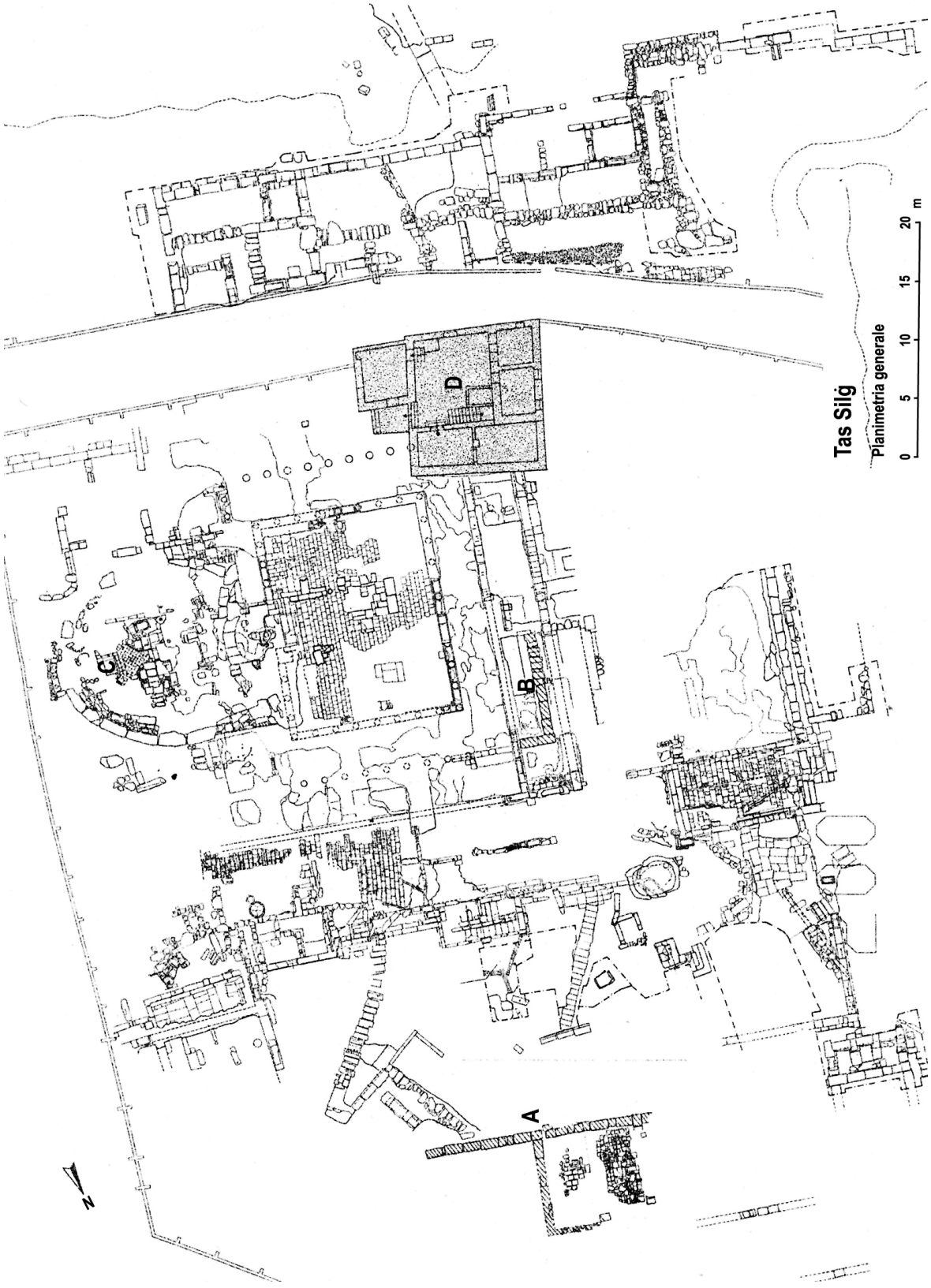

Figure 4-6: The Mitchell plan (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

In the same year Ciasca managed to bring a couple of academic researchers to Malta for a short study trip; the reason for this visit was to recreate the *Missione* with a new broader-based research agenda. The group consisted of three members of the late *Missione*: Maria Giulia Amadasi, professor of Semitic languages at the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' and two former students of Cagiano, Rossignani, professor of Greek and Roman Archaeology at the Catholic University of Milan and Francesco D'Andria, Professor of Greek Archaeology at the University of Lecce (MUS 22/63 II: 275; MUS 74/89).

In the aftermath of this visit Ciasca submitted a sketch plan for a long-term research project to the Museums Department, which was to be carried out by a new research entity born from the ashes of the old *Missione* (MUS 114/63: 162). The on-site activities resumed in 1996 with a general survey of the site. At the heart of this evaluation campaign was a stratigraphic rendering of any feature or horizontal element excavated in the sixties (MUS 114/63: 164,169). The Mitchell plan provided the graphical support required for this work. Since 1997 excavations have been carried out with a specific focus on the historic occupation of the site in line with the chronological sequence set in the sixties (Figure 4-7). Within a shared overall research agenda, the research units have targeted specific objectives in terms of chronological and cultural horizons. The complementary nature of their expertise and tasks has served the cause of a comprehensive approach to the site. An important turning point in the investigations is registered in 2003 when a unit of prehistoric archaeologists from La Sapienza, headed by Cazzella finally joined the team. Since then it has gradually unveiled crucial evidence of the site's occupation throughout the Neolithic and Bronze Age.

Figure 4-7: First year of excavations by the second *Missione* (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

Ideally, carrying on along the same path traced out by Cagiano and Moscati in the sixties, the *Missione* worked consistently at Tas-Silġ, combining the study of artefacts and, lately, ecofacts with on-site activities (MUS 114/63; MUS 22/63 II; SCH 21/2003). In very broad terms the work combined two macro-areas of necessarily interconnected research: one on the artefacts stored mostly at Cottonera and one on the on-site activities. A specific programme of bio-archaeology on the sacrificial remains was also set up (MUS 114/63: 162). Cottonera has been arranged in accordance with pragmatic principles of accessibility of the material for study purposes. A time-consuming task was to recreate the stratigraphic pottery sequence. The on-site activities have targeted untouched deposits with a general reassessment of contexts already investigated in the 1960s.

Over the last 18 years, the *Missione* programme has mainly employed Italian professionals and post-graduate students with sound experience in stratigraphic excavation and in buildings archaeology. These students were recruited from La Sapienza University which maintained overall direction of the project until Ciasca died in 2002,

Cattolica University (Rossignani was head of the *Missione* from 2002 until her death in 2013), and the University of Lecce to which is affiliated the new director, Semeraro (MUS 114/63: 162). On occasions the *Missione* availed itself of the expertise of professionals from other academic institutions and from the private sector. A few non-Italians were involved as volunteers in the research activities. Finally, a number of non-archaeological specialists were employed mainly in operations related to conservation and presentation works such as backfilling and relocation of features randomly left all over the site.

The Italians came back to Malta not only to conclude the research begun in the 1960s but also to contribute actively to the conservation and public fruition of the Tas-Silġ site. In 1993, following an invitation of the Museums Department, Ciasca set up a collaborative project between the University of Rome La Sapienza, the General Superintendence for post-seismic intervention for Basilicata and Campania, and the Maltese Ministry of Education and Human Resources that was in line with this new policy. The project's proposal specifically tackled the issue of public access to the site, listing the measures required to preserve and display the monument (MM archive - *Progetto di Sistemazione dell'area archeologica di Tas-Silġ*). An updated version of this first project was prepared in 1995, which also included the deviation of the Zeijtun-Delimara public road (MUS 22/63I: 273, 286; *Sistemazione dell'area archeologica di Tas-Silġ (Malta) – Progetto 2005*). None of those projects went ahead due to financial constraints. A Few years later, however, the *Missione* successfully applied for a generous financial grant from the Italian Foreign Office to set up a pilot project for the conservation and display of the Tas-Silġ site. This was the first time in the history of the research at Tas-Silġ that money was specifically devoted to the physical preservation of the monument. The

Istituto Centrale per il Restauro of Rome was entrusted with coordinating and supervising the conservation activities performed by commercial contractors specialized in archaeological restoration (Figure 4-8) (Bergamaschi and Rossi, forthcoming).

Figure 4-8: Conservation operations on *cocciopesto* flooring (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

The *Missione* monitored the archaeological aspects of the conservation procedures. Between 2000 and 2003 archaeological and conservation activities ran in parallel. An activities agenda was established, balancing conservation and archaeological priorities; straightforward risk assessment and planning tools were introduced to facilitate this process (Bergamaschi and Rossi, forthcoming). In addition to conservation works conducted by professional conservators: 1) a protocol of preventive measures was established to minimize the damage caused by the excavation process; 2) a series of small projects, such as removing and relocating out-of-context stone elements and systematically backfilling old trenches that cut across the site, was carried out (Bergamaschi and Rossi forthcoming). This conservation programme lasted only four years, but it was a success nonetheless. Internally, it

made the archaeological team aware of the consequences of their investigations in terms of preservation issues. Each archaeological research unit, therefore, was required to follow routine procedures before and after each season, which were specifically established to adequately protect the features exposed by the excavations. In general terms, the very fact that the Italians had invested considerable resources in tackling previously neglected issues was an important result. Not to mention the fact that the very nature of conservation procedures facilitated their appreciation by non-professionals, as in most cases results were visible and readily understood (DOI – Press Releases: 1691; Times of Malta 02 December, 2000, 28-29; The Sunday Times, 17 December, 2006, 115; Bergamaschi and Rossi 2002; Bergamaschi and Rossi forthcoming). The *Missione* conservation programme was suspended at some point between 2004-2005, but was never formally concluded (7.4.3).

University of Malta

In 1994 the University of Malta submitted a proposal for an excavation project at Tas-Silġ to the Maltese authorities. This project was to be part of the Summer School in Archaeology organized jointly with the University's International Office. In 1996 the Department of Classics and Archaeology of the University of Malta inaugurated its annual Archaeological Summer School combining on-site activities with a preliminary processing of their finds. Set up as a training programme, the workforce largely consisted of graduate and undergraduate archaeological students from the same Department with a smaller number of international intake. Academic staff from Malta and overseas institutions contributed to the processing of the artefacts and ecofacts retrieved during the excavation. The Project Directors were Professor Bonanno (1996-2004) and Professor Frendo, Professor of Oriental

Studies (1996-2000). Dr Vella, current director of the Department, was Assistant Director throughout the excavation project, which officially ended in 2004 (MUS 81/2002).

The investigation activities focused on the Southern enclosure. The field strategy adopted involved a limited number of trenches dug outside the structural remains excavated by the Italians in the sixties. The preliminary results of these excavations have been published (Bonanno and Frendo 1997, 8-10; 2000, 64-114; Corrado, Bonanno and Vella 2004) and the final report has been submitted to the publisher. Apart from its archaeological achievements with the creation of complementary datasets to be integrated with the results from the north area, the Tas-Silġ Summer School provided training opportunities for almost an entire generation of young professionals who nowadays hold posts of responsibility in the Maltese heritage sector. In addition to that an outreach programme was set up to make local people aware of the project (Times of Malta, 12 July, 2002, 32-33) (7.3)

4.3 Archaeological outcomes

This chapter has so far provided an account of the various stages of the research at Tas-Silġ. The following section presents the major archaeological outcomes from those investigations.

The site of Tas-Silġ has been defined as 'an abridged account of Maltese archaeology' (DOI – Press Releases: 1691). The archaeological evidence testifies to intense building activity over several millennia. The limestone hill of Tas-Silġ is approximately 50 m above sea level and is oriented East-West with a gentle gradient to the South and a sharper slope to the North (Recchia 2004-2005). Late Neolithic builders erected their main temple on the highest plateaux. Phoenicians and Punics dedicated a shrine to their female deity Astarte, then

associated with the Greek Hera and the Roman Juno, on the same plateaux (Ciasca and Rossignani 2000; Rossignani 2005-2006). Later, a Christian community established a place of worship there (Rossignani 2009b). Over the centuries, the slopes around the plateaux accommodated a variety of structures linked to the main buildings on the topmost area (Ciasca and Rossignani 2000; Rossignani 2009a). Tas-Silġ retained the nature of a sanctuary for most of its life. A place consecrated to supernatural entities, yet with functions that far exceeded cultic and devotional purposes. The great sanctuary of Astarte was multifunctional in this way and it can be cautiously argued that so was the vast complex developed in the Late Neolithic period (Cazzella and Recchia 2006; 2011; 2012). The Late Antiquity settlement on the hill was fortified and possibly incorporated religious, trade and military functions (Bruno 2004).

This section offers a diachronic overview of the occupational history of the site based on the existing literature. It is structured around mainstream interpretations, but some controversial issues regarding the interpretation of evidence are also presented. The material is organized in two macro chronological sections, Prehistory and History, which are split in further sub-sections.

4.3.1 Prehistory

Research on the prehistoric phases of Tas-Silġ has been systematically carried out since 2003. However, some structures belonging to the early complex and a large number of findings dating to prehistoric and proto-historic phases had been retrieved well before, during the 1960s excavation. At that time these findings were unexpected and their existence greatly widened the chronological horizon of the site, opening a challenging, new chapter in its history (Mallia 1965; 1966).

Late Neolithic

The context

The first building experience at Tas-Silġ was part of the Maltese Temple Culture, the extraordinary socio-cultural phenomenon that occurred in the Maltese islands during the 4th and the early 3rd millennium BC (Pace 2004b). Within this time frame, an extremely intense building activity was registered between 3600 BC (Ggantjia Phase: 3600-3000 BC) and 2500 BC (Tarxien Phase: 3000-2500 BC).

Figure 4-9: Chronological table of Maltese Prehistory (after Cilia 2004)

The erection of several megalithic buildings, traditionally referred to as temples is the most remarkable evidence of such

phenomenon (Pace 2004b; Grima 2004). The best-known temple sites consist of up to four temples, often structurally interconnected and combined with external altars, trilithon structures and megalithic precincts. Each site has a specific identity within a building pattern common to all the temples. Indeed all sites possess distinctive architectural and artistic features. This may possibly mirror specific choices made by the community to which these sites once belonged (Cazzella and Recchia 2004-2006; Recchia 2005-2006). Although the origins and causes of Maltese Temple Culture are disputed, it is agreed that a well-structured socio-cultural system and high-level local creativity underpinned such impressive architectural, engineering and artistic achievements (Pace 2004b, 28-9). Those monuments have been investigated in relationship with the local characteristic of their landscape, showing that their location within the islands' landscape seems to be dictated by combined factors and among the most prominent easy access to the sea and proximity to agricultural lands. These megalithic buildings possibly formalised the natural variability of the landscape, acting as main points of reference for each territorial and social unit and as ritual and physical *trait d'union* between different parts of the land and between sea and land (Grima 2004). Another interesting research field investigates the multi-sensory experiences related to Maltese Temple Culture (Skeates 2010, 156-197). The temple sites were public and communal places, most likely related to a religious sphere, although very little can be said about the deities worshipped and the rituals and ceremonies performed in them (Pace 2004b; Cazzella and Recchia 2004-2006).

Together with such freestanding masterpieces, the Late Neolithic communities also created complex hypogeal buildings devoted to collective burials and associated rituals. Simple rock-cut chamber

tombs (Żebbuġ phase-4100-3800 BC) evolved, mostly during the Ggantjia and the Tarxien phases, into highly elaborate underground cemeteries (Pace 2004b, 25-29). The burial sites of Xagħra Circle and of Ħal Saflieni are fine examples of this evolution. They may possibly have been linked to the Ggantija and Tarxien temple sites, respectively (Pace 2004b, 26-27).

The Prehistoric complex

The sacred complex of Tas-Silġ in the Late Neolithic comprised at least four temples and a series of other structures distributed over a huge area (Figure 4-10)(Cazzella and Recchia 2012). Temple I stands on the very top of the hill and makes the most of the East-West orientation of the natural rock (Figure 4-11)(Recchia 2004-2005, 242). While the main entrance to the West faces inland, there is also there is a back access with a ramp to the East. The outer wall (excluding the façade) was possibly made of orthostats placed directly on a row of massive horizontal blocks, still preserved. Part of those horizontal blocks not covered by the vertical slabs formed a sort of bench, which run along the whole perimeter (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 17).

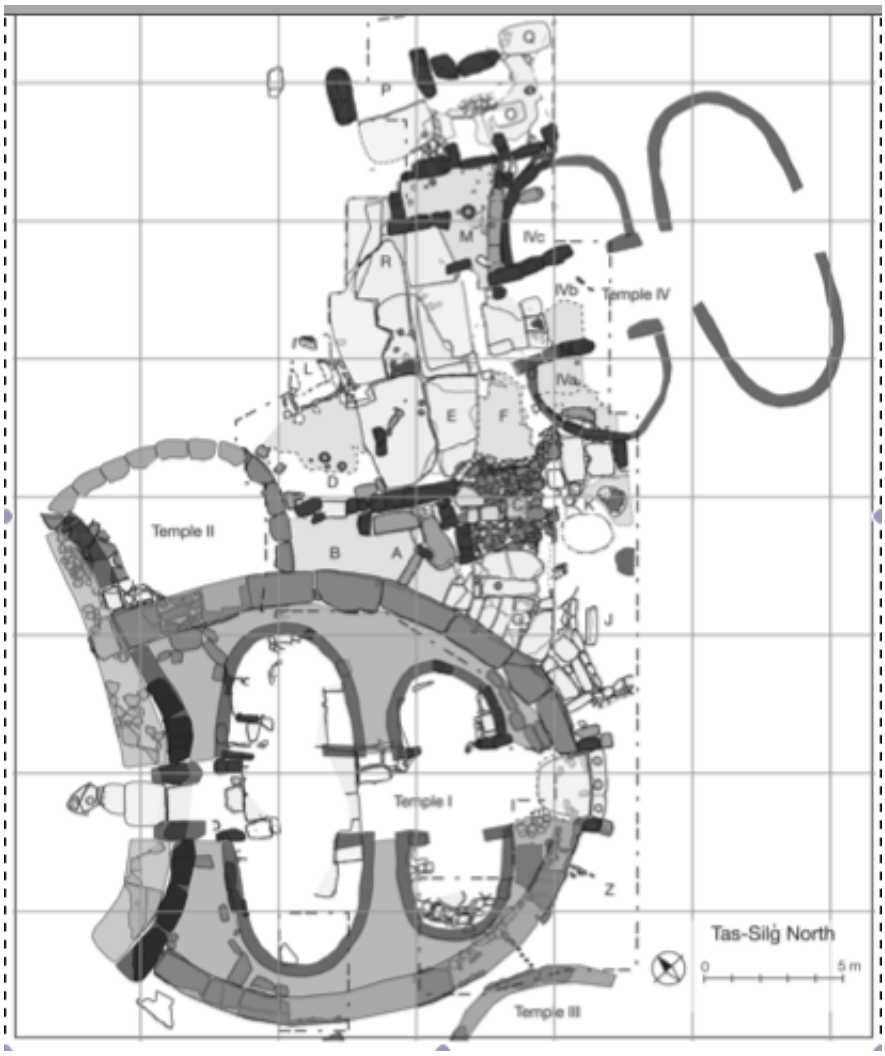

Figure 4-10: Late Neolithic complex in Tas-Silġ. North-east area with major temple structures (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 19 *fig* 1)

The oval-shaped outer wall is interrupted to the west by a monumental concave façade. Almost all the blocks of the main entrance are still in place, although they have been reshaped over the centuries. Little can be said about the entrance doorway, which was probably narrower than the historic one still visible (Recchia 2004-2005, 244-246). This concave façade of uprights extends north-westward to include the front of the smaller Temple II (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 20). Therefore, both Temple I and Temple II share the open-air courtyard to the West (Recchia 2004-2005, 254-59). At the foot of the façade large

slabs of stone are laid flat to form a sort of bench and the last one to the South is pierced by a hole. This characteristic is also found in the main temple in Ħaġar Qim and the South Temple in Tarxien (Recchia 2004-2005, 247). The presence of a bench laid around the façade is also quite common (Recchia 2004-2005, 247). The threshold of the entrance doorway is at the same level as the bench and three-steps level out the difference in height between the external bedrock surface and the inner floor. The bottom step of this stair with a large hole, located on the axis of the inner central corridor, is still visible (Figure 4-11) (Recchia 2004-2005, 246).

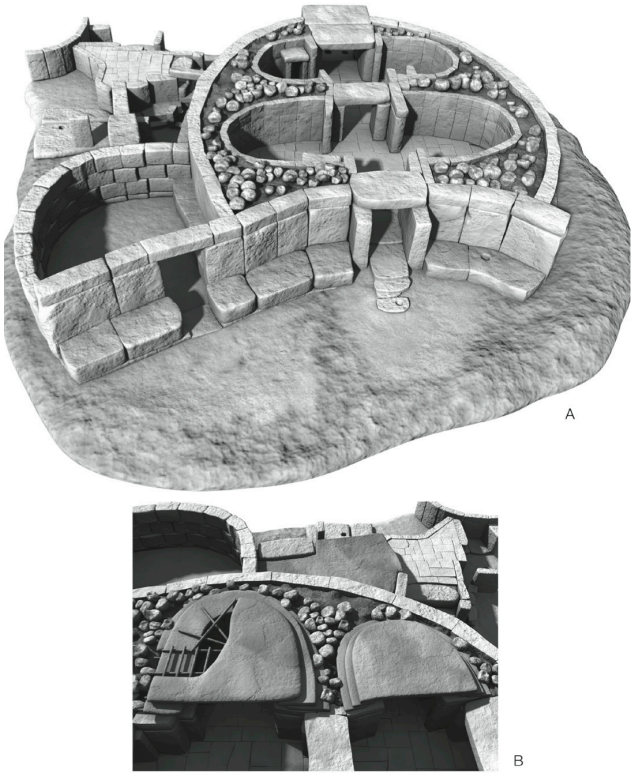

Figure 4-11: a. Temple I and II with concave West façade; b. 3D virtual reconstruction of temple roofing (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 20 *fig* 2)

Facing the sea to the East, on the same axis as the main entrance, is what has been recently recognised as the secondary entrance

to the temple (Figure 4-12). Today, a threshold slab, framed by two orthostats jutting out from the perimeter wall, marks this entranceway (Recchia 2004-2005, 247-248). Before excavation work began in 2003 this entrance had been generally interpreted as a rear niche (Figure 4-19)(Ciasca 1976-77). The architectural element appears to be better suited to serving as an entrance given its projecting setting from the outer wall, as a careful reading of the archaeological evidence now available also supports this interpretation (Cazzella & Recchia 2004-2006; Recchia 2004-2005, 249). Further support is provided by the analogy with the major temple in Ħaġar Qim, which presents two axial entrances. This correlation was first drawn by Trump (2002, 138-9), who firmly rejected the interpretation hitherto widely accepted of a back niche for the temple and identified the flooring slab as belonging to either an inner passage or an entrance.

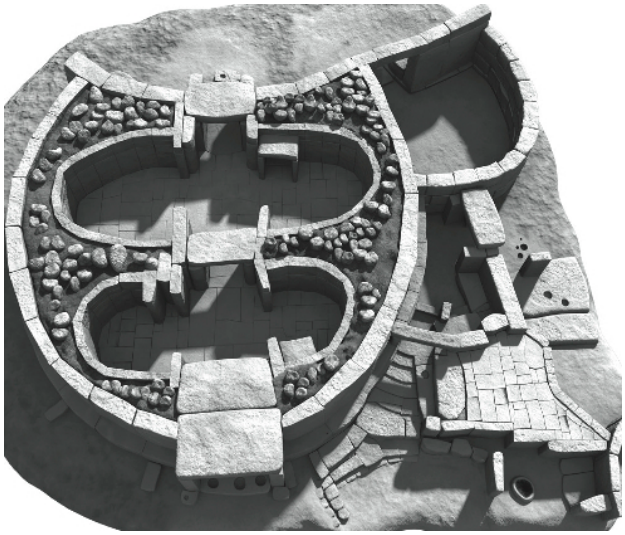

Figure 4-12: Reconstruction of Temple 1 with East entrance in the foreground (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 21 *fig.* 3)

The three holes in the upper surface of the threshold might be interpreted as libation holes (Trump 2002, 138). They were likely connected with a ritual performed by worshippers between the inside and

outside spaces of the sacred complex. It has been suggested a symbolic journey through the temple, which may have started in the courtyard outside the main Western entrance and ended beyond the back exit to the East (Recchia 2004-2005, 249; Cazzella & Recchia 2004-2006, 67). This interpretation is consistent with the model proposed by Grima (2003), which highlights the significance of the movement of people within the temples. He argues that architectural decoration (namely low-relief panels) together with architectural organization and partitions were used to create a representation of a cosmological system that guided people as they walked through the sacred spaces of temples. The islanders' world, dominated by the juxtaposition of land, sea and sky, is here synthesised and represented in a 'cosmological scheme of universal significance' (Grima 2003, 38). Drawing from Grima's thesis, it may be further argued that at Tas-Silġ this cosmological scheme encompassed the landscape itself with people moving across the inland into the temple and through it towards the sea. The ceremonial movement across this sacred space mediates the passage between land and sea, enhancing its liminal function.

The archaeological evidence suggests that the threshold, currently c 2.5 m long and 50 cm wide, was originally wider, extending at least to the inner limit of the perimeter blocks. Its width was reduced when alterations were made to the sanctuary at some point in its history (Cazzella and Recchia 2004-2006, 67). There are two square stone blocks, one on either side, adjacent to the orthostats at the entrance. This solution is widely used in Temple architecture to mark both entrances and inner passages (Recchia 2004-2005, 250).

Internally the temple consists of four oval apses organized around a central corridor that is aligned with the double entrances (Figure 4-12). The pair of apses to the west is slightly bigger than the

ones to the east (Ciasca 1976-77). The central corridor may become narrower as it passes between the pairs of apses to the east and the west. The apses are connected to the corridor by small orthostats. There may once have been small niches between the orthostats, which would probably have contained other architectural elements (Recchia 2004-2005, 251). Scattered segments of the original flooring have been retrieved: different techniques were used depending on how the areas were partitioned and the need to level the ground surface inside the temple (Recchia 2004-2006, 52).

Since its first discovery in the 1960s Temple I has always been referred to as the focal point of the whole temple site (e.g. Ciasca 1976-77; Ciasca and Rossignani 2000; Recchia 2004-2005). More recently new investigations have challenged this interpretation and suggested a much more complex layout for this temple site. It has been partially brought to light a structure of comparable size, Temple IV that features a pair of opposing apses and a West court with adjoining rooms and open spaces (Figure 4-10) (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 20-21; 23). Among the megalithic structures retrieved along Temple IV court is a well-preserved quadrangular room (chamber M) that features a massive table 'altar' (Figure 4-13), a small 'mushroom-shaped' limestone altar, a couple of circular stone hearths, a series of small cylindrical artefacts and an upright megalith with carved central window, which belongs to the type of structures commonly known as oracle holes (Figure 4-14) (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 21; 23-26).

Figure 4-13: 'Altar' from chamber M (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 25 *fig* 8).

Figure 4-14: 'Oracle hole' on the western side of Chamber M (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 25, *fig* 9).

The features of chamber M were preserved on the spot thanks to the same sudden event that possibly burned to the ground apse IVA of Temple IV by the end of the Late Neolithic (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 28). The excavation of this apse as well as of chamber M provides extremely interesting evidence about architectural solutions employed by the Temple Period builders. It also offers fresh data to contribute in the debate about use/disuse of the sanctuary during the Bronze Age (Cazzella and Recchia 2012). The roof of the chamber (apse IVa) collapsed probably as consequence of fire and sealed up the Late

Neolithic layers. Fragments of burnt timber and torba have been found in the collapse layers providing precious data on the building technique used in the roof construction (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 22). In addition to key data on building solutions adopted in the temple site, the investigation has retrieved under the collapse layers crucial evidence on the use of this space during the Late Neolithic, including a series of ritual paraphernalia, which were arranged on the floor (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 23).

The space between Temple IV and I is packed with megalithic structures. They consist of a series of open and closed spaces, roughly rectangular in shape. Among the features discovered in this area, special mention deserves a megalithic staircase that leads to an elevated platform or terrace (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 20-21; 23) probably used by a priest to address the worshipers, gathered in the East courtyard (Figure 4-15). A similar staircase was found at the beginning of the 1900s in the Tarxien temple site, wedged between the Central and the East buildings temples (Pace 2004c, 62).

Figure 4-15: Megalithic staircase adjoined Temple I (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 23, *fig* 6).

On the hill slope to the West and away from the crowded sector of Temples I-IV, is a huge horizontal monolith with carved concave top. It was probably associated with an ovoid-shaped standing megalith, a menhir, at some point knocked to the ground and never put up again (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 27). In the Early Bronze Age (Tarxien Cemetery period) the concave monolith might have served as top slab of a dolmen (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 27; 32; 34). It was certainly preserved in Historic times and possibly used in connection with specific rituals (Bonzano 2004-2005).

In the southern enclosure, beyond the modern Zejtun-Delimara road, there is little evidence of Prehistoric occupation. There are some megalithic blocks, encapsulated with historic structures, and some Tarxien Phase materials found during the 1960s excavation (Caprino 1973, 56-57).

A statue

During the 1960s a poorly preserved statue was found reused as building block in the façade of the late 2nd century BC temple of Astarte (Vella 1999). This statue (Figure 4-16) was most likely part of the architectural and ritual setting of the Late Neolithic temple site. It is an around 1 m high sculpture carved in high relief from a block of globigerina limestone. It shows evidence of severe damage and mutilations, which are mostly related to circumstances prior to its deposition in the place of its discovery (Vella 1999). It is suggested that at some point between the Late Neolithic and the late 2nd century BC, the most prominent features of this effigy were intentionally erased for reasons that can range from pure iconoclasm to specific ceremonies to neutralise some sort of supernatural powers (Vella 1999). Despite the damages this statue

unmistakably shares a number of characteristics with other anthropomorphic effigies found in other temple sites (Vella 1999).

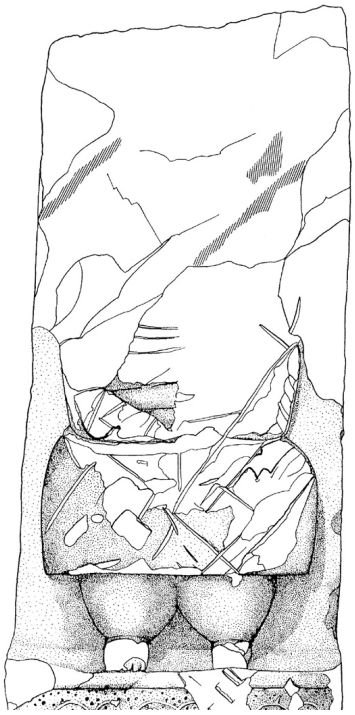

Figure 4-16: Truncckless statue from Tas-Silġ (after Vella 1999, *fig* 11).

Bronze Age

Context

The end of the Neolithic and the beginning of the Bronze Age is marked by a shift from an isolated social system (with its peculiar megalithic culture) to one formed by island communities open to overseas influence, where exogenous materials and artefacts inspired by widely circulating models became generally available. A conventional interpretation regards such dramatic changes as the outcome of a sudden collapse of the Temple culture (around 2500 BC), followed by the arrival of less sophisticated metal-using people in an apparently abandoned archipelago (Bonanno 1986, 1999; Trump 2002: 245-247). A slightly different perspective (Pace 2004a: 211-218; Cazzella, Pace and Recchia 2007: 251-255) suggests the existence of a process of progressive

transformation during which the Later Neolithic communities began to interact with small groups of metal-using travellers. The process of assimilating with the world of metals had a significant impact and led to the end of the megalithic temple culture and to the beginning of a different era which involved Malta in wider networks of exchange and movement of goods, ideas and people (Pace 2004a; Cazzella, Pace and Recchia 2007). This expanded horizon of economic and cultural mobility, together with the arrival of innovative technologies, substantially contributed to transforming the entire life system of the island communities in the second half of the third millennium BC. Within this context of change, however, some deeply rooted religious traditions of the Late Neolithic possibly survived and may have influenced the Early Bronze Age communities (Pace 2004a, 211-218; Cazzella, Pace and Recchia 2007, 251-255).

By the second half of the second millennium BC there is clear evidence that the Maltese scenario had evolved beyond the Early Bronze Age. There were changes: 1) in the general occupation patterns throughout the islands; 2) in the type of settlements with a preference for fortified sites in defensible locations, and on a broader (trans-regional) scale; and 3) in the development of a main trade system between the Central Mediterranean and the Aegean that marginalised the role of Malta. These shifts took place during the mature period of the Bronze Age (after *circa* 1500 BC) referred to as the Borġ in-Nadur phase after a fortified settlement that commanded the bay of Marsaxlokk (Pace 2004a, 219-227). The relationship between Malta and Sicily was still strong in the Final Bronze Age (Bahrija phase), which ended with the arrival of the Phoenicians (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 34).

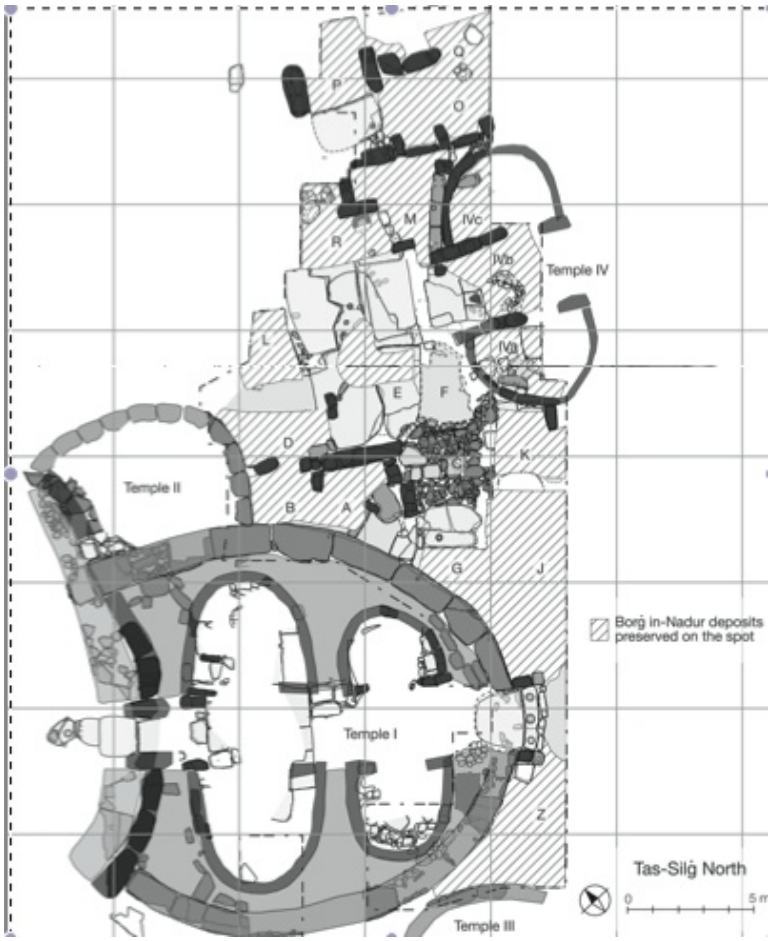

Figure 4-17: North-east area with evidence of Borġ in-Nadur occupation (after Cazzella & Recchia 2012, 33 *fig* 14)

The site

The evidence from Tas-Silġ shows a continuity of human presence after the Temple Periods, across the Bronze Age centuries up to the Early Iron Age (Figure 4-17) (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 28). The nature of the Bronze Age occupation of the Tas-Silġ site and the ways the site developed up to the beginning of Iron Age when the Phoenicians arrived are still matter of debate. The prehistoric stratigraphy has survived in different areas of the site and an untouched archaeological deposit that spans the Tarxien Phase of the Late Neolithic (3rd millennium) and the Borġ in-Nadur Phase of the Late Bronze Age (II half of 2nd millennium) was discovered (Recchia 2004-2005, 239;

Cazzella and Moscoloni 2004-2005; Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 29). Excavations conducted by the University of Malta integrated the data from Northern enclosure and provided evidence of Early Bronze Age occupation (Bonanno 1999, 211-212). Some areas around Temple I clearly suggest a continuity of use of the temple site during the Early Bronze Age (Tarxien Cemetery phase). The space outside Temple I eastern entrance was cobbled and the doorway itself was fitted to the change and stays in use (Recchia 2004-2005, 256, 259, 260-61; Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 29-32).

The spaces of the Neolithic temple site were systematically reoccupied during the second half of the 2nd millennium BC (Borġ in-Nadur Phase) (Figure 4-17) (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 32). This evidence supports the idea that the Late Neolithic structures, although partially rearranged, where mostly standing during the Late Bronze Age (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 32-34). Very little can be said about the use of those spaces, although some evidence seems to point at the survival of some sort of symbolic value of the place (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 34). The data coming from other sectors of the site seem to support the idea that the sanctuary somehow preserved its structures and its ideological significance (Brusasco 2003, 14-15; Cazzella and Moscoloni 2004-2005). Overall the continued occupation of the site throughout the Bronze Age is confirmed and is consistent with the broad Maltese scenario (Cazzella and Moscoloni 2004-2005). A large quantity of mainly residual Borġ in-Nadur shreds was found in the Southern area (Ciasca 1964a, 66-67; Bonello *et al.* 1964, fig. 2). This evidence, together with the topography of the area, characterised by a terrace, suggests that some defensive measures were put in place here as part of the Late Bronze Age rearrangement of the site and that they were later demolished (Ciasca 1993; Bonanno and Frendo 1997, 9; Cazzella and

Moscoloni 2004-2005, 268). The site was certainly occupied during the Final Bronze Age (Bahrija phase) (Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 34-35)

Agate artefact

A fragment of an agate artefact with a cuneiform inscription (Figure 4-18) was found as a residual object in a historic layer on the outskirts of what it is currently believed to be Tas-Silġ's Late Bronze Age settlement (Cazzella *et al.* 2012, 599-600). This fragment is what survived of a crescent-shape object dedicated to a deity in the city of Nippur, Mesopotamia around 1300 BC (Cazzella *et al.* 2011, 599).

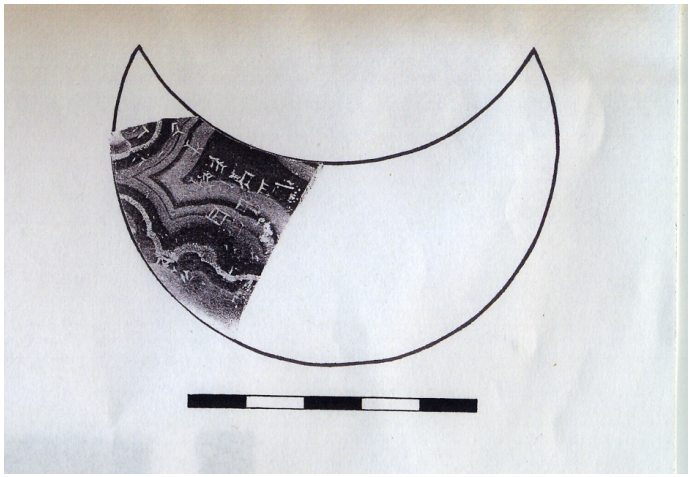

Figure 4-18: Fragment of agate crescent-shape artefact (after Cazzella *et al* 2011, 599 *fig* 1).

The stratigraphic location says nothing about the time when the lunar crescent arrived in Malta (Cazzella *et al.* 2011, 600, 605). Cross-relating a series of evidence on the role of Malta in broader regional contexts, it is believed that this artefact could have reached Tas-Silġ in the final stage of the Bronze Age in the context of well-established commercial networks between eastern Mediterranean, Sicily and Malta (Cazzella *et al.* 2011, 605-606). This indirectly adds credibility to the thesis that still in the Late Bronze Age Tas-Silġ was known beyond the local context and retained some symbolic, religious value that would have justified the

presence of this exotic object (Cazzella *et al.* 2011, 606; Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 35-36).

4.3.2 History

Astarte, Hera and Juno of Malta

The beginning of the Iron Age in Malta is connected with the arrival of the Phoenicians (end of the 7th century BC). A reading of the evidence currently available on the transition between the Bronze and Iron Ages postulates a possible coexistence between locals and the first groups of Semitic merchants (Ciasca 1982; Pace 2004a). It suggests that the settling process in the archipelago by the latter was greatly affected by the occupational pattern of the Maltese communities, possibly still organized in active and vital centres that were able to attract newcomers. In this perspective, continuity in the occupational system of the Maltese territories seems to be a persistent element across the centuries (Ciasca 1982, 139-141; Pace 2004a, 227).

The commercial expansion of the Phoenicians in the Western Mediterranean is at the root of their presence in the Maltese archipelago (Ciasca 1999). In their search for materials such as metals they had gradually built up a trans-Mediterranean trade and maritime route that often followed Bronze Age networks. During the 7th century BC Malta, strategically located on the fringes of the main Semitic route from East, acquired a predominant role as a mid-way stopping point on the way to the Western territories (Ciasca 1999). Malta's geographical position, its location in the open sea and the presence of natural harbours explains the interest shown by Semitic people even though the Maltese islands were not directly involved in any mining and metalworking processes (Ciasca 1999). It has been further suggested that the steady expansion of Greek control over South-Eastern Sicily was a very important factor in

directing the Phoenician route further South, towards Malta (Vidal Gonzalez 1996, 102- 103).

The decline of Phoenician commercial routes from East to West in the 6th century BC and the political and economic growth of Carthage meant that Malta's strategic role was greatly reduced, as it became an externally controlled Punic territory (Ciasca 1982; Vidal González 1996). Malta was too remote to actively assist other Punic settlements in their frequent disputes with the Greeks. On the contrary it is quite likely the island welcomed opportunities for trading with Greek centres (Ciasca 1982; Vidal González 1996). This commercial and cultural proximity with the Hellenic world persisted also when the Maltese archipelago entered in the Roman sphere of influence during the II Punic War (Ciasca 1982, 142-151; Vidal González 1996, 96-97; 104-105). It should be noted in passing how Malta developed independently of other Semitic colonies, showing a strong cultural and ideological tie with the South-eastern Mediterranean, between Sicily, Libya and Egypt (Ciasca 1991). This bond strengthened in the 4th – 3rd centuries BC with renewed relationships with the African coast to the east of Carthage (Ciasca 1991).

The evidence from the sanctuary of Tas-Silġ consecrated by the Phoenicians to Astarte makes this connection clear (Ciasca 1991). The foundation of the temple of Astarte in the bay of Marsaxlokk shows the ideological link between the newly acquired territory and the mainland under the auspices of the great sanctuary in Tyro in Phoenicia (Vella 1999, 229-230). Through the act of ritual and physical appropriation of this place, which commanded access to the island, the Semitic people sought to legitimize their control of the Maltese islands (Ciasca 1982, 140; Vidal González 1996, 101-103; Vella 1999, 229-230). The Phoenicians chose to establish their sanctuary at Tas-Silġ for a

series of combined factors: location, vitality of a Final Bronze Age settlement, preserved monumentality of part of the Neolithic temple site might have all played their part (Ciasca 1982; Cazzella and Recchia 2004-2006, 67; Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 35-36). A key factor in driving Phoenician decision might also have been a deep-rooted cultic and symbolic value of this place that since the Late Neolithic had somehow survived up to Early Iron Age (Cazzella *et al.* 2012, 606; Cazzella and Recchia 2012, 35-36).

The sanctuary gained an extraterritorial reputation in connection with Marsaxlokk bay, which has been interpreted as a free port where under the protection of Astarte, all seafarers, including pirates, were allowed to carry out their trading activities (Ciasca 1993; 1999). The excellent profits obtained from the taxes levied on commercial transitions, from the supply of services to ships and flotillas, and perhaps also from ship building yards were stockpiled inside the sanctuary (Ciasca 1993; 1999). The extraterritorial nature of the sanctuary meant that it acted as a place of asylum for refugees and that it probably also afforded protection to pirates who spent the winter months on the island. The temple treasures were further enriched by the gifts offered by worshippers to evoke divine protection and by other activities closely related to the religious sphere such as the manufacture and sale of goods used during ceremonies and the supply of proper hospitality services to worshippers (Ciasca 1993 and 1999; Vidal González 1996, 94-95). The economic system of the sanctuary also benefited from the agricultural activities carried out in the rural settlements and farming lands distributed in the surrounding areas. It is possible that some of the surrounding land belonged directly to the sanctuary but there is no evidence to confirm or deny this (Bruno 2004, 101).

The Phoenician-Punic sanctuary

It is difficult to know the status of the site when the Phoenicians arrived between the end of the 8th and beginning of the 7th centuries BC. It is hard to fully assess the earliest stages of their presence on the site given the complete lack of architectural evidence pertaining to the 7th century BC (Ciasca 1999, 24; Rossignani 2009a, 117). A first proper building project can be dated to sometime between 6th – 5th centuries BC (Ciasca 1991). There was renewed construction activity at the complex from the 4th BC so by the 2nd century BC the temple site had acquired its unique architecturally hybrid configuration (Ciasca 1991). At Tas-Silġ features belonging to different cultural regions were progressively combined to create an architectural and decorative melting pot (Ciasca 1991). Although quite unique, the Maltese sanctuary of Astarte can be regarded as an expression of the same cultural and monumental context as a series of monuments from Northern Africa. They all exemplify a sort of Punic-Hellenistic architecture that combines influences from Alexandria of Egypt, the Western Mediterranean and just marginally the Semitic area (Ciasca 1991).

The uppermost east-west plateau with the Temple I was at the core of the first building effort. Opinions are divided as to what the Phoenician builders incorporated from this ancient building: Trump (2002, 138-139) for instance claims that only the foundation blocks of the outer wall of the main temple survived in the new building. On the contrary, the Italians involved in the on-site investigation, following the pioneering work of Ciasca (1976-77), generally agree on the fact that the whole temple remained, including the internal partitions (Figure 4-19). Notwithstanding this argument, the prehistoric temple, or what had survived of it, became the heart of the Phoenician sacred enclosure, housing the shrine (*cella*) of the goddess Astarte (Ciasca 1976-77). To

the West it faces an adjoining courtyard that was used for public sacrifices and ceremonies.

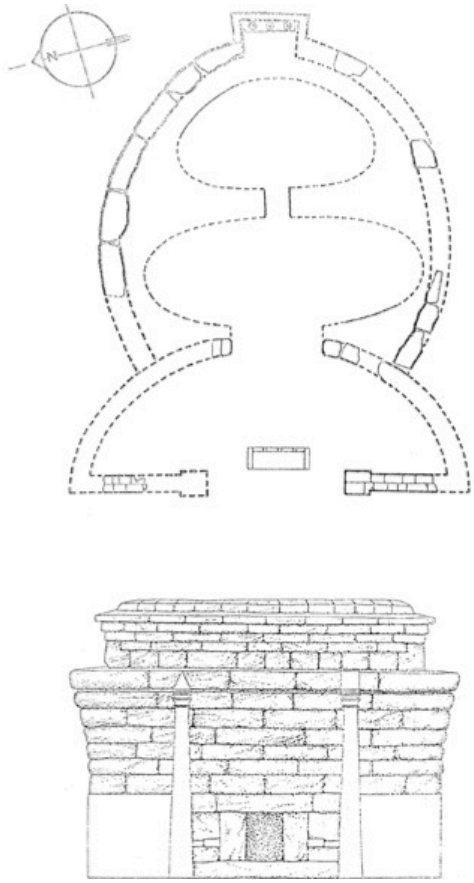

Figure 4-19: Plan and façade of the Phoeanician temple (after Ciasca 1976-77).

Around the sacred core on the hilltop, the sanctuary expanded onto lower terraces where a variety of open and closed spaces were devoted to various activities coordinated by the clergy of Astarte (Rossignani 2009a). A working hypothesis draws the pleasant picture of gardens and woody areas blending with the buildings within the sacred enclosure (Hunt 2000). Ritual precincts with altars, water reservoirs and basins are located in the Northern open-air area. On the ridge between the topmost esplanade and the Northern terraces historic builders incorporated the prehistoric megalithic basin in a new layout, arguably for rituals in the presence of water (Rossignani 2009a). There were storage facilities on the Southern side, which was also used as rubbish

dump for the votive offers made by worshippers in the sanctuary (Bonanno and Frendo 1997).

Among the first architectural acts to be ascribed to the Phoenicians is undoubtedly the construction of an offering altar, situated in the open-air area in front of the prehistoric temple (Figure 4-20) (Ciasca 1993; Rossignani 2009a). This altar is referred to as 'ground altar' as it is at the bedrock level (Ciasca 1993). It was used for animal sacrifices that required the use of fire, as the smooth, reddened surface of the table tends to suggest (Ciasca 1993). The original structure has been reconstructed as a rectangular slab (2.90 x 1.10 m) enclosed by parapets on the short sides and by three vertical elements (*baetylus*) embedded in a low parapet on the long side to the east (Ciasca 1993). There were barriers on the edges to prevent sparks and ashes from scattering around during the repeated burning procedures. The western side was left open and it was here that the priest, standing to prepare the offering, performed the ceremony facing the temple façade (Ciasca 1993, 228-229).

Figure 4-20: Central ground altar with superimpositions (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

The altar was purposely aligned along the axis of the entrance to the Prehistoric building, creating a ritual and visual link between the

place for sacrifices and the shrine of the goddess that resided in the roofed space of temple (*cella*) (Ciasca 1999). During the Phoenician-Punic phases the central courtyard was paved with a beaten earth floor, which was restored over the centuries up to the late 2nd - early 1st BC when a stone flooring sealed it (Rossignani 2009a). Until then, a number of freestanding vertical elements, most probably *ex-voto* offered over time by worshippers in fulfilment of vows or as acts of devotion, were lodged in the floor (Figure 4-21). These elements were removed when the paving slabs were laid (Rossignani 2009a, 121-123).

Figure 4-21: Central courtyard: negative marks of vertical structures lodged in the Phoenician-Punic flooring (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

The Greek-Hellenistic shift

Stratigraphic readings confirm that when the floor was paved in stone the Phoenician ground altar was already in disuse having been replaced by a freestanding offering table erected on the Western side of the courtyard (Figure 4-22) (Bonzano 2004-2005). This altar was in turn rebuilt in a Greek-Hellenistic style at some point between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC. The Hellenistic structure remained in use for long time and it is likely that it was dismantled at the time of the construction of the

conjectured Byzantine church. In fact part of the top *cyma* moulding of the altar with the dedication to Astarte was supposedly re-utilised in the church presbytery (Bonzano 2004-2005). Main features of the Hellenistic altar were: a rectangular table located on top of a wider platform (*prothysis*) and a short staircase worked into the front side of the platform (Bonzano 2004-2005). On the Northern side there was an adjoined feature that can be interpreted as the base for a *trapeza,* the Greek-Hellenistic movable offering table (Bonzano 2004-2005).

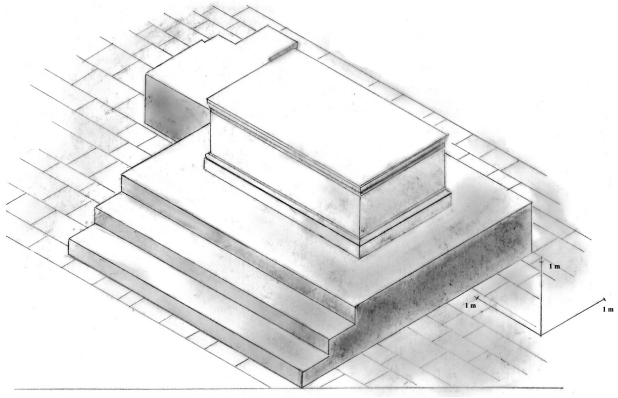

Figure 4-22: Hellenistic altar (after Bonzano 2004-2005, 367 *fig* 10).

Another structure, located beside a water reservoir within the courtyard should be ascribed to the same ritual and chronological context. It is most likely a lustral basin (*perirranterion*) used for rituals and ceremonial purifications that characterise the cult of Hera (Bonzano 2004-2005). In the Northern sector of the sanctuary the ritual precinct (features 43 and 38), a sacred space (that may have been roofed) housing a low monumental altar, appears to belong to the same Greek cultural framework (Semeraro 2004-2005). Ciasca (1993, 233) put forward the interesting hypothesis suggesting a possible connection with the cult of Demeter and Core, underworld Greek deities introduced to Carthage at the beginning of the 4th century BC.

All this evidence seems to suggest that between the 4th and the 2nd BC some sort of break or deviation from the established religious tradition took place at Tas-Silġ. It occurred in conjunction with the introduction of distinctly Greek-Hellenistic architectural features in the sacred enclosure (Bonzano 2004-2005). On-going research focuses on the scale of this change, investigating whether it only affected some ritual structures or whether involved the entire sanctuary, and to what extent (Bonzano 2004-2005). Despite the impact of Greek-Hellenistic culture, Tas-Silġ retains an entirely Semitic and Punic character throughout the centuries as the epigraphic evidence shows.

In the name of Astarte: a treasure in words

The *corpus* of inscriptions retrieved at Tas-Silġ amount to a large number of texts carved or depicted on pottery and some wonderful examples of engraving on architectural and cultic features (Figure 4-23). These latter testify the financial involvement of worshippers in the construction and renovation of the sanctuary.

Figure 4-23: Ivory plaque (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

Most of the inscribed pottery appears to have been used by devout people for real or symbolic offerings of food in order to propitiate the Goddess. A type of cooking pan (the Greek *kakkabe* - *κακκαβη*)

suitable for boiling food is well attested. Part of the cooked food was usually offered to the God and part of it was consumed in the sacred area by those who made the offering. With specific reference to Tas-Silġ, it has been suggested that the offerings and the meals probably took place in the Northern sector around the altars. Another group of inscribed containers consists of specific types of vases and clay lamps used by the clergy for ritual purposes.

The dedicated pottery found at Tas-Silġ was mostly produced locally (perhaps within the sacred enclosure) and the inscriptions/dedications were impressed before firing. This pottery confirms the deep-rooted use of the Phoenician-Punic language until 2nd – 1st BC accompanied by the less frequent use of the African Neo-Punic (2nd BC – 1st AD) and Greek, found mainly on imported pieces. The writing on the pottery offered by the worshippers is simplified whereas the texts of the inscriptions on vases and lamps used by the priests are written accurately in traditional Punic. This suggests the religious caste of the sanctuary of Astarte in Malta had a strong sense of identity manifested within a wider Punic cultural context (Amadasi Guzzo 2004-2005).

Figure 4-24: Inscription with the name Milk'ashtart (after Amadasi Guzzo 2004-2005, 298 *fig* 20).

Two inscribed objects have recently caught the attention of scholars as they may possibly testify the affiliation of a male god in the sanctuary of Tas-Silġ. Attention has focused on a little bowl that bears the name of the Semitic male deity Milk'ashtart and on a fragment of bronze naming the Greek heroes Heracles (Figure 4-24) (Amadasi Guzzo 1993a, 210-212; 2004-2005, 297; 299). Milk'ashtart was well known in Syria and Lebanon where he shared a large sanctuary with Astarte. He was later identified with the Greek Heracles and Roman Hercules. So the Semitic Milk'ashtart, identified with Heracles-Hercules of the Classic tradition, may have been hosted as a subsidiary god in the great sanctuary of Astarte in Malta (Amadasi Guzzo 1993a, 210-212; 2004-2005, 297; 299).

The fanum Iunonis

The most remarkable transformation of the Tas-Silġ sanctuary dates to sometime between late 2nd and early 1st centuries BC (Figure 4-25). This building event marks a change in the ritual practices and reveals a substantial affiliation to the Greek-Hellenistic culture (Rossignani 2004-2005; 2009a). During this period Astarte was assimilated to the Greek Hera, who in turn soon became associated with the Roman Juno). The sanctuary of Astarte, already under Roman political control, was monumentally renovated in Hellenistic forms. This circumstance has to be understood as part of a broader phenomenon that involved the most famous and sacred sanctuaries of the Mediterranean area (Rossignani 2004-2005; 2009a). Thanks to the patronage of kings, members of the aristocracy, and those who had made their fortunes in trade, several sanctuaries were monumentalized with the adoption of a court-*peristylium* (an open space surrounded by a four-sided columned porch) as the core element of the architectural composition. This feature can

also be found in royal and aristocratic residences testifying the interconnection between political and religious spheres at that time (Rossignani 2004-2005; 2009a).

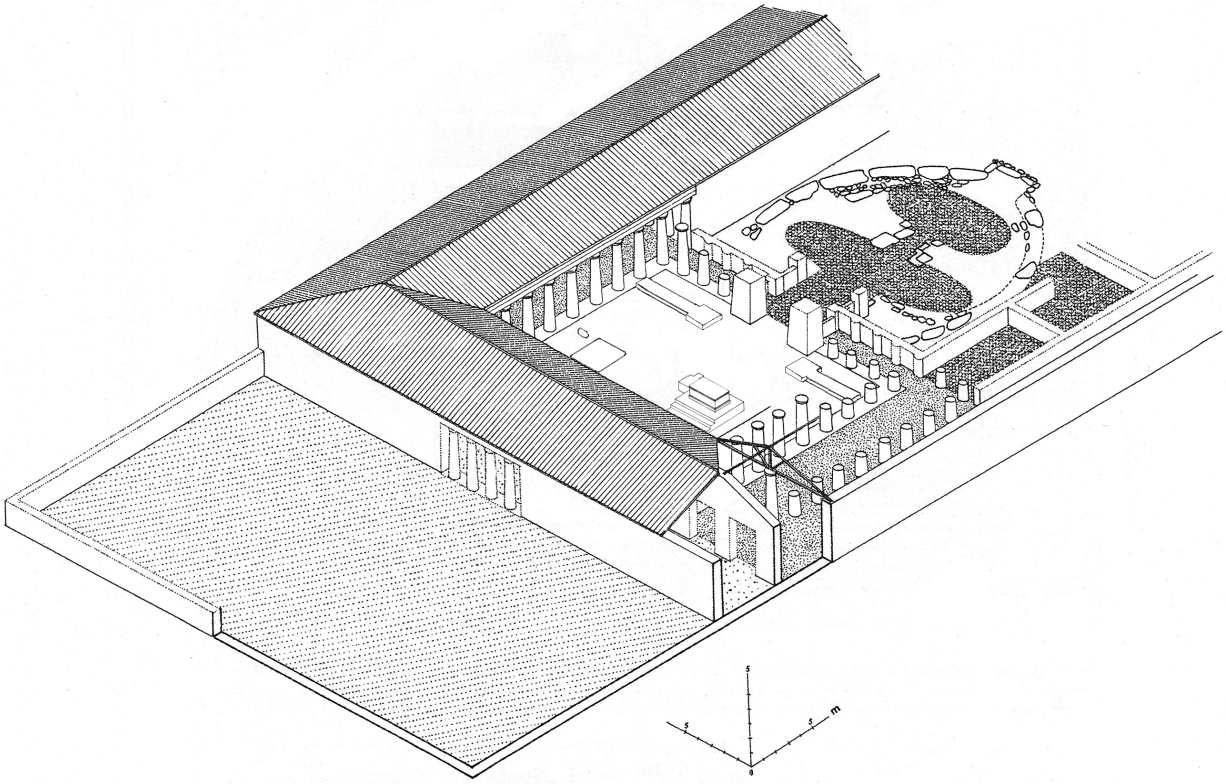

Figure 4-25 Recostruction of the court-*peristylium* with the temple to the East and the access to the West through a courtyard (after Rossignani 2004-2005, 361 *fig* 6).

In the absence of any epigraphic evidence, it is not possible to give names to the highly-educated magnates who promoted the magnificent restoration of Tas-Silġ. It is, however, possible to postulate the socio-economic context to which they belonged. The data currently available suggest that they were most likely linked to the class of maritime traders or merchants (*mercatores*) that had had a strong economic interest in the archipelago since the end of 3rd century BC (Rossignani 2009a). The sanctuary of Astarte of Malta, strategically located above the main harbour of the island, most likely acted as a

centre for mediating and protecting maritime business interests (Rossignani 2009a). Because of this role the Tas-Silġ sanctuary probably attracted some merchants eager to associate themselves with its fame and holiness (Bruno 2004, 117, 159-164; Rossignani 2009a). The architectural changes of the late 2nd – early 1st centuries substantially redefined the aspect of the entire sacred area, which was now fortified by a massive perimeter wall supplemented with towers. A section of this fortification linked to a square tower is still visible at the Northern limit of the site where the East-Western wall cuts the early Hellenistic Northwest – Southeast precinct 43 – 38, marking its obliteration (Semeraro 2004-2005).

The uppermost plateau was at the core on the late-Hellenistic transformation (Figure 4-25): temple, courtyard and main ritual features were included in a huge quadrangular space bounded by a monumental four-sided columned porch (*porticus* or peristyle) (Rossignani 2009a). The back wall of the Northern and Southern branches of the *porticus* were extended beyond the limit of the previous courtyard, including to the East the whole temple building and to the West the monumental entrance. Here a sequence of open and closed structures guided the visitors to the heart of the sanctuary (Rossignani 2009a). This architectural path consisted of an airy courtyard and then a roofed gallery adjoined to the Western branch of the colonnade. Passages and secondary entrances gave access to the other sectors of the sanctuary outside the monumental *peristylium* on the hilltop. The perimeter *porticus* was paved in *opus signinum*, a reddish floor made of lime mortar and crushed pottery shreds with a regularly spaced motif of white marble *tesserae* (Rossignani 2009a).

The porch (which may have had a flat roof) was tentatively reconstructed as a one storey high structure with a double nave on the

Northern and Southern side (Rossignani 2009a). While the colonnades on the Eastern side facing the temple were Corinthian, all the other colonnades were Doric. It has been suggested that pillars were erected at the temple entrance to enhance its monumentality, thereby interrupting the Corinthian colonnade (Rossignani 2009a). The prehistoric temple, whose internal walls were very probably still well preserved, was paved with a fine mosaic of white marble. The same precious flooring was laid to the North and to the South of the perimeter temple wall in twin rectangular rooms enclosed by the peristyle. In this way, the curvilinear walls of the ancient building were encapsulated within a rectangular space that conferred uniformity upon the whole sacred compound (Rossignani 2009a).

In front of the temple façade, beyond the columned porch, was the central square that housed the Hellenistic altar and the ritual basin (*perirranterion*). The *stelae* lodged in the ground that used to crowd this courtyard were removed and, most likely, placed somewhere else within the sanctuary (Rossignani 2009a). This meant the square appeared to be more airy, enhancing the contrast with the surrounding closed areas. It was paved in limestone flagstones with a darker slab marking the location of the earliest Phoenician ground-altar (Rossignani 2009a). This late architectural choice was the last act of a series of interventions aimed at perpetuating the memory of the original offering table despite its disuse; it also underlines the symbolic role this altar retained over the centuries (Rossignani 2009a).

During the first centuries of our era the sanctuary of Tas-Silġ was involved in restorations and minor alterations, but broadly preserved its late Hellenistic layout (Bonzano 2012; Bruno 2004, 108). An interesting building activity dated to the early Imperial time modified the East side of the *porticus* with the erection of two twins rooms at the

North and South corners of the colonnade (Bonzano 2006-2007; Bonzano 2012). Although the archaeological evidence suggests that the sanctuary was continuously occupied throughout the Roman Empire, it became progressively less important probably because of the growing prestige of the temple of Apollo in Melita (Mdina-Rabat), the major town of the archipelago. The epigraphic evidences suggest that large scale restoration work was undertaken at the Melita sanctuary in the 2nd century AD thanks to the financial support of the most prominent person of the municipality (*primus omnium melitensium*) (Rossignani 2008, 127). The steady economic decline of the Tas-Silġ sanctuary was probably related to the diminishing importance of its religious sphere and the consequent drop in the number of visitors. At some point between the 4th and 5th centuries AD the site was most likely uninhabited (Bruno 2004, 120-121; 166).

After Juno

The structures of the abandoned sanctuary were partially reused to accommodate a new settlement that included a Christian place of worship. The debate about the dawn of this phase is still debated, although recent studies have provided precious insights on the issue (Bruno 2004, 109; Bonetti and Perassi 2005-2006; Rossignani 2009b). While some scholars suggest that this phase began in the late 4th or early 5th centuries AD (Cagiano 1967), others argue that a date between the 5th and 6th centuries AD is more accurate (Luttrell 1984; 1991). The complex on the Tas-Silġ hill was certainly an active trade centre throughout the Byzantine era (6th – 9th centuries AD). It partially reused the defensive structure of the late Hellenistic sanctuary, updating it on the seaward side. The building technique adopted makes it possible to date this reinforcement to sometime between the 8th and 9th centuries AD

when Saracen coastal raiders threatened the central Mediterranean area (Bruno 2004, 102-103).

After the long phase as a sanctuary dedicated to Astarte-Hera-Juno the fortified complex on the hill consisted of a Christian place of worship, constructed in the area of the court *peristylium* where the main temple stood, and a settlement that developed close by (Rossignani 2009b). The community established around the church occupied large portions of the ancient complex and the construction technique used combined perishable materials with stone massively reutilised from previous buildings. Particularly interesting is the widespread use of column shafts either cut in half to create paved surfaces or left whole in walls. This settlement merits a specific study to shed light on its nature and chronology. It has been suggested that a monastery had been established along with the Church (Cagiano 1975). This would be a local reflection of a broader historical phenomenon that witnessed the forced migration of religious communities from the Near East and Africa who were fleeing Vandal persecutions (5^{th} – 6^{th} centuries AD) and, later (mid-7^{th} century AD onwards) Muslim expansion (Cagiano 1975). This interesting hypothesis, however, is not as yet supported by scientific evidence (Buhagiar 1996).

It is been nearly half a century since Cagiano (1967) first suggested the existence of a church and a baptistery right in the heart of the ancient sanctuary. Although his detailed reconstruction cannot be archaeologically proven, the general idea of the sanctuary's shift towards Christianity is still widely accepted, and there has been renewed interest in this issue in recent years (Rossignani 2009b). There are, in fact, several cases in North Africa where Christian establishments were set up in what used to be Roman sanctuaries (Rossignani 2009b). In many cases the church was established in the area of the central courtyard and

the baptistery in the *cella* of the temple (Cagiano 1967). It has been suggested that this was the layout adopted at Tas-Silġ where the structures retrieved in the middle of the Late Hellenistic courtyard have been interpreted as the ruinous remains of a three-aisled basilica with eastern-facing transept (Cagiano 1967). The central apse of the church matches the curvilinear alignment of the temple façade. For the most part this church was built using material obtained from previous structures, as noted above when discussing the Hellenistic altar (Bonzano 2004-2005).

Figure 4-26: Golden coin (*tremisse* dated to 670-74 AD) retrieved under the baptism basin (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archaeologica Italiana a Malta*).

An early Christian presence in the Tas-Silġ sanctuary is undoubtedly proven by the erection of a baptistry right in the middle of the *cella* of temple (Bonetti and Perassi 2004-2006). Very little is known about this baptistry as all that survives today is the central baptismal font and the surrounding area partially paved with a precious *opus sectile* and partially with two different types of *cocciopesto* (Bonetti and Perassi 2004-2006). The area in *opus sectile* is tiled in black and white slabs arranged to form a diamond-shaped pattern, as can still be appreciated in

the few elements survived and in their footprint in the thick mortar bed (Bonetti and Perassi 2004-2006).

Recent research suggests at least two construction phases for the font. The first phase, probably contemporary to the *opus sectile*, is between the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th centuries AD (Bonetti and Perassi 2004-2006). A basin, dug out of the bedrock that survives underneath the more recent font would belong to this first stage. It has been suggested that the second period of use began sometime between the late 5th – early 6th centuries and the 2nd half of the 7th century (Bonetti and Perassi 2004-2006). When the new font was built, the stone flooring was restored and integrated with *cocciopesto* (Bonetti and Perassi 2005-2006). The basin was originally clad with slabs and it had steps on both of the short sides to facilitate the access to the pool by those being baptised (Buhagiar 1996; Bonetti and Perassi 2005-2006: 214-216).

An unexpected discovery under the basin in 1999 confirmed the use of this font between the end of the 5th and the 2nd half of the 7th centuries (Figure 4-26). A considerable number of coins (278) were retrieved from underneath the bottom slab. These coins very probably dropped through the drain hole of the pool. This accords with the well-established Paleo-Christian and Byzantine tradition of throwing coins into the font during the ritual act of baptism. Most of these coins can be dated to sometime between the end of 5th and 534-538 AD, when the Byzantines took control of the archipelago. It has been suggested that sometime in the 6th century the font ceased to be used (Perassi 2004-2005; Bonetti and Perassi 2005-2006, 232-237). The archaeological evidence would seem to postulate a *hiatus* in the occupation of the site between the end of 9th and the second half of the 10th centuries. This circumstance mirrors the widely accepted broader historic picture of an

abandoned archipelago up to the mid-10th century when groups of Muslims first settled in the islands. This hypothesis, however, is currently subject to revision. With specific regard to Tas-Silġ the perspective of an occupation without cease between the 9th and 10th centuries appears to be well founded, although it is extremely difficult to define the nature and extent of the change faced by the centre in that period (Bruno 2004, 25-27; 122; 170).

Evidence of occupation between the second half of the 10th and 12th centuries was retrieved during the 1960s excavations, although it is difficult to ascertain the nature of the settlement. The predominance of trade containers over other pottery types suggests the centre's roles were primarily commercial and storage for goods intended for local distribution and export (Bruno 2004, 121-122).

In the following centuries the ruinous complex served as a stone quarry and its structures were progressively dismantled. In the 17th and 18th centuries some of the material was used to build farm houses on the site. One of these has partially survived and has been used to store tools during the excavation season and to house the staff of the security service that provides surveillance to the site.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter has outlined the archaeological circumstances of the making of Tas-Silġ and it has offered crucial insights into the unmistakable archaeological value of the research outcomes. The on-going investigations have greatly enhanced the understanding of the complex and extremely dense occupational history of the site. Some of the questions raised, however, are likely to remain unanswered due to the combined effects of the nature of the archaeological deposit and of the excavation conditions. The latter have changed significantly over

time, depending on the availability of resources, expertise and the attitude of the researchers along with variable political, and cultural circumstances.

The narration developed chronologically. While on the one hand this reflects the interpretation construct set by the excavators, on the other hand, it also facilitates the retrieval of factual data when the study will engage with the more analytical and interpretative discussion in the following chapters.

Chapter 5 **Polarized archaeologies: Prehistory versus History**

5.1 Introduction

While this thesis primarily investigates the archaeological process officially commenced in 1963 when scattered remains of ancient occupations on the hill of Tas-Silġ were for the first time object of a major investigation (Bonanno and Frendo 2000), the analysis presented in this chapter has a slightly different agenda, as it takes a step backward in time and looks into the preliminary conditions that made those investigations possible. Focusing specifically on the decade preceding the beginning of excavations, it shows how the politics of archaeology of those years affected the development of archaeological discipline in Malta.

Politically the years preceding 1963 were crucial years for Malta: after centuries of colonial ruling, it embarked on a short but intense journey towards self-determination (Frendo 1991). The role of archaeology in legitimizing, reinforcing or challenging specific political stances and actions (e.g. Díaz-Andreu and Champion 1996; Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Meskell 1998) also in relations to colonial contexts (Gosden 2001; Gosden 2004; Vella and Gilkes 2001) has been widely considered in the literature. This chapter, in particular, examines to what extent the archaeological debate fits the fast-evolving Maltese political scenario of those years. It shows that the discipline was dominated by controversies and unexpected shifts of balance in power-relations. Following the approach developed by ANT researchers (Latour 1987; 2005) this chapter digs out the main elements of controversy and follows their traces through the words and the actions of the actors involved in

the process. The format is a rich textured account that engages with institutional, group and individual associations (Latour 2005). Archival material is primary source of data in developing this analysis.

The archaeological debate revolved essentially around Prehistoric and Historic archaeology and the way they were used to support competing interests. This chapter explores a series of complementary archaeological circumstances in order to understand the roots and the development of this controversy. While the first part explores the circumstances of the Malta Ancient Monuments Survey (Survey), led by British academia, the second one examines the case of Historic studies where British and Italian interests clashed. In addressing this dispute the role of Maltese institutions and individuals are also carefully considered. This is because they did not simply provide the stage for the British-Italian contest, but also because they actively engaged in the process and mediated in the relationship between Italy and Britain. The political scenario in which this archaeological debate is embedded is presented first.

5.2 The context: the final chapter of a long colonial history.

5.2.1 A contested territory

There is little doubt that the national identity of Malta has been shaped under the influence of Italy and the United Kingdom. There are a number of reasons for this and Malta's geographical position certainly plays a crucial part. The Italian leverage is self-evident since its major island (Sicily) lies just 90 km off the Maltese coast. Italy shares a long history of cultural and political proximity with Malta and it had a pivotal role in nurturing Maltese anti-colonial nationalism since the

Risorgimento, the movement behind the creation of the Italian nation-state (Frendo 1992; 2000).

Malta became a British crown colony in 1813 and ever since then it has been regarded as a British fortress colony because of its strategic position. The circumstances of being economically and politically subject to the British crown and in geographical and cultural proximity to Italy, had a crucial impact on the way Malta set the stage for its political independence proclaimed on the 21st September 1964 (Frendo 1991).

5.2.2 The 1950s: integration versus independence.

The path that eventually led to Malta's political independence has its origins in the 1880s with the gradual rise of a polarized national political scene, divided between pro-Italian and pro-British supporters. This polarization was institutionalised in the 1920s with the creation of the pro-Italian *Partito Nazionalista* (National Party – NP) and the pro-British Labour Party (MLP), along with the somewhat ambivalent Constitutional Party (Frendo 2000). After 1945, the political debate in Malta focused on the possible restoration of a form of governmental autonomy, which had been suspended by the British in 1933. The force of this debate strongly supported the movement that led to the proclamation of a new Maltese Constitution in 1947. The new Constitution, in essence, provided for a diarchy: the Maltese Prime Minister and his cabinet, whose powers were limited to domestic policy, and the Colonial Cabinet headed by the British Governor, which preserved British control over most matters of foreign policy and defence (Smith 2006, XXXV).

In the 1950 general elections, the NP guided by Enrico Mizzi obtained a relative majority of votes and formed a right-wing cabinet

which had had a short and difficult life. Giorgio Borġ Olivier, who succeeded Mizzi as Prime Minister and as leader of the NP, did not succeed in a vote of confidence from the Parliament and was forced to resign. The collapse of the cabinet resulted in the calling of a new general election that was held in May 1951. Borġ Oliver was elected Prime Minister, in charge of a large coalition cabinet. Despite a tense relationship with the English Governor, Borġ Oliver kept his post until 1955 when the MLP won the elections and Dominic Mintoff succeeded as Prime Minister (Smith 2006, XXXVIII-XXXIX).

Every coalition cabinet in Malta during the 1950s focused on the relationship between Malta and the United Kingdom and debated how Malta's colonial status should be redefined. The options ranged between total independence and full integration. Borġ Olivier, as Prime Minister, strongly advocated dominion status for Malta within the Commonwealth. Contrary to such pro-independence sentiments, was the plan for a full integration into the United Kingdom. This project had its foundations in the socio-economic circumstances of Malta as a British fortress colony. This perspective particularly appealed to the leader of the MLP, Mintoff who probably saw it as a chance to negotiate better conditions for Maltese workers employed in HMs Dockyard, many of whom faced redundancy (De Marco 2007, 60).

In the mid-1950s, under Mintoff's time as Premier, the integration proposal acquired so much strength that the issue was formally addressed in Westminster. During the debates in the Commons, deep concern was expressed about the financial implication of integration, which would entitle Malta to huge social benefits and economic assistance in order to meet UK welfare standards citation. Concern was also expressed that the Maltese case might prompt a domino effect, encouraging other small colonies to submit similar

requests. Conversely the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Alan Lennox-Boyd, set out a strong political counter-argument in favour of the proposal. He pointed out that the rejection of closer association with the UK might push Malta to seek a similar arrangement with Italy. Such a scenario would not have been considered a satisfactory outcome of the crisis especially as Cyprus, at the time, was seeking to join Greece (Smith 2006, XL). In Malta, a settlement on this matter was sought in 1956 through a referendum. The results showed the vast majority of the Maltese population had little appetite for integration and it confirmed the power of the Church in driving people's opinions on secular matters (Smith 2006). The results also demonstrated that British presence in the Mediterranean had entered a new phase that was moving away from a position of supremacy (Smith 2006).

5.2.3 1958-1962: the turning point

The 1956 referendum marked the birth of the Maltese sovereign state (Pirotta 2001). It also meant that thousands of jobs were at risk. The British response to Malta's political claims was the publication in 1957 of a Defence White Paper, which foresaw a drastic reduction in British employment of the local workforce (Pirotta 2001, 17-22). With this gloomy economic and social scenario as a back-drop, the relationship between Mintoff and the British government deteriorated to the point of turning into a violent political confrontation. Following Mintoff's resignation in April 1958 and the NP's failed attempt to form a new Cabinet, the Colonial Office declared a state of emergency. The 1947 Constitution was suspended and the archipelago was subjected to the direct rule of HM Governor, Sir Robert Laycock (Pirotta 2001, 30-37). The colonial administration exploited the tensions existing between the NP and the MLP and between the MLP and the Church. This lack of

unity among Maltese political players worked to delay the return to direct government (Pirotta 2001, 586; 650; De Marco 2007, 61-65). These circumstances worked to favour the NP and its leader Borġ Olivier, who was gradually perceived both in Malta and in the UK as the key player for a successful solution of the crisis (De Marco 2007, 61-65).

In October 1961, a new interim Constitution was enacted following the recommendations of the Blood Commission, specifically set up to restore self-government in Malta (Smith 2006). However, the Blood report was at first opposed by Mintoff who interpreted it as an instrument that would subject Malta to the UK. Mintoff dismissed the essence of the report as 'some vestiges of political freedom for Malta' and 'the substance and essence of (British) power' (Smith 2006, lV).

In February 1962, under the new Constitution, the NP led by Borġ Olivier won the General Elections and formed a new Cabinet. This news was welcomed by the British Government, which considered the NP leader to be the only person with whom the future of Malta and its relations with the United Kingdom could be negotiated. Following the declaration of sovereignty in March 1962, the question of Malta's independence from colonial rule dominated the political debate at home and abroad, and international political circumstances further encouraged this debate (Smith 2006, L-LVI).

A referendum on independence was held in May 1964, delivering a tiny victory for the pro-independence supporters (Smith 2006, LVIII). Notwithstanding this result, the formal proclamation of independence from colonial status was far from being achieved. The status of the Church in the new constitutional arrangements and the terms of a new defence agreement, in particular, proved to be hugely controversial issues in British Cabinet discussions. It was, however, the risk of a return to power of Mintoff that prompted Westminster to

quickly pass the Bill approving Malta's independence. The settlement included favourable provisions for the British in terms of the defence agreement but it had to drop proposals to limit the temporal power of the Church. Once the British Cabinet had ratified the proposed plan for Maltese political self-determination, Independence became a reality on 21st September 1964 (Smith 2006, LIX).

5.3 Malta's Prehistoric Antiquities

5.3.1 The Survey as British answer

The study of material past in Malta has always been marked by sharp controversies and polarised interests (Pessina and Vella 2009; Vella and Gilkes 2001). In particular a British – Italian opposition took shape in the context of prehistoric studies (Pessina and Vella 2009). The megalithic phenomenon, previously associated to the Phoenicians in a clear political attempt to equate Maltese and British on the base of a common Levantine origin (Pessina and Vella 2009, 402-7; Vella and Gilkes 2001, 364; 354-7), was ascribed to the prehistory in the early 1800s (Vella and Gilkes 2001).

The Italian involvement in the debate about Maltese megalithic phenomenon dates back to the 1930s when Mussolini was in power. This interest in prehistory, that sounds unusual in the context of Fascist propaganda, well suited the purpose of getting closer to Malta (Pessina and Vella 2009, 407-408). An Italian archaeologist in particular, Ugolini worked intensively on Maltese prehistory and put forward his theory (*teoria meliocentrica)* on the primacy of the archipelago as the cradle of Mediterranean civilizations (Pessina and Vella 2009, 410-3; Skeates 2010, 54-55). Its revolutionary theory was widely welcomed in Malta and, more importantly, it revitalized the British interest in Maltese prehistory. Malta was a British possession and the British could not

passively witness the rise in popularity of Ugolini's theory without reaffirming their rights on Maltese archaeology. Animated by this spirit, the Colonial Office urged the British School of Rome to counterbalance the Italian success with 'something on a bigger scale' (Vella and Gilkes 2001, 368-372). The Survey on the prehistoric remains of Malta was the answer to this appeal (Skeates 2010, 58-60).

The project was set up by the Royal University of Malta and the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies, under the general supervision of the Director of the British School at Rome, John Ward-Perkins. The late Director of the Institute of Archaeology at UCL, John Evans was the principal investigator for the Survey. This vast project took twenty years to complete. It formally started in 1950 and, after a long and difficult journey, was completed in 1967 and published in 1971 as *The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: a Survey*.

These were crucial years in the history of the Maltese archipelago. The Survey began when Malta was firmly in British hands, and continued during the period when full integration with the UK was a feasible option for the tiny Mediterranean archipelago (5.2.2). The Survey experienced delays and financial difficulties while the political debate on the Islands' Dominion status raged. When Malta celebrated full political independence from Britain in 1964 it was far from complete (6.2.1). The Survey was eventually published when Malta was about to obtain full economic and military independence from its former ruler. Without doubt, these major political circumstances affected how the project was managed and implemented over the years. However, other factors, not necessarily of political nature, also played a role in determining how the Survey developed. The following sections provide a critical account of these combined elements.

5.3.2 Veto on Italian membership

In 1948, the Royal University of Malta in consultation with the Inter-University Council for Higher Education in the Colonies appointed a sub-committee to evaluate the proposal for a survey of the archipelago on the grounds of its rich archaeological heritage. In 1949 the Secretary of State for the Colonies made the necessary funds available to the Royal University (Bugeja 2006, 35). A Survey Committee was established to supervise the project. The Rector of the Royal University of Malta, Prof J. A. Manché, was appointed chairman. Among the other members was the Director of the National Museum: Dr J. G. Baldacchino who was replaced in 1955 by Captain Charles Zammit (BRS 470/2).

In 1950, Ward-Perkins became chief advisor for the project (BRS 470/2). His appointment was no surprise, given the well-established ties existing between the School of Rome and Malta (Vella and Gilkes 2001, 360-2). Ward-Perkins also had personal links with the Royal University of Malta where he held a teaching position in archaeology in the early stages of his career (Vella and Gilkes 2001, 368; Bonnano 1996). Following the invitation of Manché, at the end of 1950 Ward-Perkins came to Malta to set up the Survey Commission that was to be in charge of the scientific supervision of the project (BRS 470/2). Members of this body were the same Ward-Perkins and Stuart Piggott, a Professor at the University of Edinburgh.

According to the original plan, the Commission was supposed to be formed of three experts. The circumstance of the selection of the third member clearly shows how politics prevailed over scientific concerns. Above all, it provides evidence of the polarized nature of the archaeological discipline in Malta, with the British and the Italians standing at opposite poles. In particular, it was agreed at first to make the 'Commission international in character' (BRS 470/2). This idea,

endorsed by Ward-Perkins, was fully supported by Piggott. Both advocated the engagement of Dr Luigi Bernabò Brea, Superintendent of Antiquities in Eastern Sicily and director of the Archaeological Museum at Syracuse in Sicily. He was 'one of the foremost archaeologists in Europe in mental power, but his understanding of central Mediterranean prehistoric problems in particular, puts him for this job in a class by himself' (BRS 470/2). Piggott also claimed that he would be the best choice 'better than another Englishman and all those who have worked in the Mediterranean' (BRS 470/2). Despite his outstanding scientific stature Brea was not appointed. Political circumstances put a firm veto on his involvement as Piggott overtly claimed in a slightly provocative tone: '… I appreciate the political etc difficulties involved. … do you want a English (non-Welsh, non-Irish, non-Scotch) member? If so I've no suggestions as I don't know the field' (BRS 470/2). To justify this exclusion, Ward-Perkins used the scientific argument of a different approach to the research 'our third member should be a north-west European, who will see eye-to-eye with you about the way to approach the problem and to present the material … person who will collaborate easily' (BRS 470/2). The issue of the third expert was then 'circumvented' by limiting the Commission to just two members, Ward-Perkins and Piggott (BRS 470/3).

Quite ironically Brea's work and his scientific authority deeply affected the Survey's outcomes. In the foreword to his first book about Malta, Evans, acknowledged the invaluable contribution of Brea's 'magnificent work' on Sicily and the Lipari islands and how Brea's work had inspired his own research (Evans 1959, 16). The two scholars had the chance to discuss some of the conclusions reached in this book and although their opinions diverged on some points, from this discussion

clearly emerges a reciprocal appreciation of their scientific achievements (Brea 1960, 132-7).

5.3.3 The project

In September 1952, having resolved the question of the Commission, the Survey's activities began. As Archaeological Assistant for the Survey, Evans was in charge of coordinating the data collection by members of the Museum staff and students of the Royal University and of drafting the final report (Evans 1959, 28; Evans 1971, V; Skeates 2010, 58-59). The project began well and was brought to the public attention in the summer of 1954 when BBC's 3rd Programme broadcasted the interviews of Ward-Perkins, Piggott and Evans (Crawford 1954, 131; Daniel 1954, 204; Skeates 2010, 59). However, by 1956 the publication of the Survey was far from being concluded although some efforts were made to complete it while 'Malta is (or isn't?) being integrated into Britain itself' (BSR 476b1). Little progress was made in the following years with photographs and drawings still unfinished (BSR 479b2).

The issue of the delayed publication of the Survey was a great disappointment and caused feelings of shame among British academics. Ward-Perkins, who considered himself responsible for the entire project encouraged Evans, at that time Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology at the University College of London, to complete his job. In a letter to Dr Glyn E. Daniel, Fellow of St John's College at Cambridge and editor of *Antiquity*, Ward-Perkins held Evans solely responsible for delaying the project: '(to say the least) Malta gave him an opportunity from which he has himself had great profit, both academically and materially' (BSR 479b2: letter WP-Daniel). The volume *Malta* in the Ancient Peoples and Places series edited by Daniel, partially responded to Ward-Perkins' concern. Evans claimed the volume provided a summary of the latest

knowledge about Maltese prehistory, embodying the conclusions drawn from the partially completed Survey some of which had already been published in 'scattered articles'. Evans also anticipated the publication of a comprehensive corpus with the final results (Evans 1959, 15; 28-9). By 1963, the Survey material was finally ready for publication, but the funds available were insufficient (BW 90_647).

Ward-Perkins' request for more funding was unsuccessful probably because the project itself was perceived as a relic of the Maltese colonial experience that was coming to an end. It was not a priority either for Britain, in the process of dismantling its Empire, or for the Maltese establishment seeking to sever its cultural ties with its colonial ruler. The system of power relations that established the Survey project as a priority in the context of Maltese archaeology was falling apart: it would have been soon replaced by new power-relations and new alliances. The inverse fortunes of the Survey project and the *Missione* project mirrors this shift in power relations between Britain and Italy and influence in shaping the development of archaeology in Malta.

The Survey was eventually completed in 1967 and the volume 'The Prehistoric Antiquities of the Maltese Islands: a survey' was published in 1971. The news particularly pleased those scholars with a research interest in Malta. David Trump in reviewing the Survey noted: 'for many years now, the 'Evans Corpus' has been spoken of in Malta in tones varying from eager anticipation to frank disbelief. It can now expect, and will surely receive, a very warm welcome' (Trump 1971, 237).

5.3.4 The omission

In Evans' Survey, Tas-Silġ only merited one line in a footnote to the Bronze Age chronological section and a reference as 'supposedly

megalithic remains and settlements' in the catalogue of sites where it was wrongly listed as being in the Parish of Zabbar (Evans 1971, 227, 232). Trump touched on this omission when he stressed that Evans had paid more attention to the minor site of Ghar Mirdum, published in 1965, than the 'much more important remains discovered by the Italians at Tas-Silġ' (Trump 1971, 237). This circumstance seems even more perplexing in consideration of the fact that the Italian team had encountered unmistakable evidence of important Neolithic and Bronze Age occupations (4.3.1); as early as the 1964 campaign the excavators had brought to light, among other artefacts, the famous prehistoric statue (4.3.1). Furthermore the extremely efficient publication strategy of the *Missione* (4.2.1; 6.3) made these results immediately accessible to an expert audience, including UCL that holds the full series of *Missione* reports.

To seek a political explanation to this omission in line with Ward-Perkins' view on Italian research is tempting, but unlikely. This research has opted instead for a more practical reason. There is evidence that Evans was able to check the *Missione* Reports up to the 1966 volume (Evans 1971, 227, 245). The final draft of the Survey was ready for publication in 1967 so information on Tas-Silġ provided in reports published after that date could not have been included. It is reasonable to think that in the rush to finish this massive project, a legacy of his very early career, Evans may have neglected some pieces of information. At this stage it seems that he performed an opportunistic choice, selecting the most readily available data. This is certainly true for the site of Skorba, investigated between 1961 and 1963 by Trump on behalf on the National Museum of Malta (Evans 1971, 36-9). Evans had the opportunity to read Trump's final draft (Trump 1966, V; Evans 1971, V) and, once published, to review it (Evans 1967, 77-9). Beyond any

practical explanation, it is fair to say that Trump's work was a benchmark in the study of Maltese prehistory and this fact alone would have made its mention in Evans' publication unavoidable.

5.4 Post-Prehistoric Studies: the rise of the Italians as competitors to the British hegemony

The approach to the study of Maltese archaeology, as promoted in the Survey, had a fundamental impact on the development of the island's archaeological debate. Indeed, the strong emphasis placed on prehistory came at a very high price. At first it resulted in the marginalisation of all other chronological phases, for instance the study of Phoenician-Punic antiquities, which was authoritatively halted by the Survey's decision makers. However, the failure of Phoenician-Punic studies in the 1950s turned into a success at the beginning of the 1960s when the disciplinary vacuum created by the Survey's single-minded policy was filled by the *Missione* that became the sole leading entity in the development of historic archaeology in Malta. Here is how these crucial circumstances evolved and interplayed.

5.4.1 Prehistoric versus Phoenician-Punic studies

While the Inter-University Council for Higher Education Overseas and the Royal University of Malta were about to establish the Committee that would administer the Survey's provisions, the director of the Museum Department Baldacchino pursued his scholarly interests in the Phoenician antiquities and personally invited Professor Donald Harden, Keeper of the Department of Antiquities at the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford, to visit Malta and set up a join research programme. Harden accepted the invitation and suggested mapping and classifying every known Phoenician tomb to provide the foundations for a comprehensive

study on Phoenician culture in the archipelago (BRS 470/1; Bugeja 2006, 36).

Harden's remarks were promptly published in a British journal, refreshing the interest in Maltese Phoenician antiquities. Harden's report triggered an immediate reaction in Ward-Perkins who interpreted it as a threat to the Survey, to which – he recommended - all available resources should be dedicated. He added that Harden's interference 'has already trailed a very juicy red-herring in front of Maltese noses that love nothing better' (BRS 470/3), underlining how easily Maltese attention could be diverted from agreed plans. At the time Ward-Perkins was successful in making a case against the Baldacchino-Harden plan. Ward-Perkins also provided evidence that Baldacchino had reacted negatively to the forced interruption of his project. The Director of the British School at Rome warned Piggott on the eve of his first visit to Malta of Baldacchino's unsupportive attitude and of his Punicophilia, stressing the need for a 'certain diplomatic skills in dealing with him' (BSR 470/3). During his visit, however, Piggott found the Museum Director to be an attentive and kind host (BRS 470). It is not surprising that the Museum Director's attitude towards the Survey project was unenthusiastic given the blatant exercise of power at the highest colonial level that had crushed his professional ambitions. However, Baldacchino may well have confined his hostility to Ward-Perkins who had been directly involved.

5.4.2 The specific case of Tas-Silġ

The point of attack: a missed chance

Notwithstanding Ward-Perkins' efforts to keep archaeological research in Malta on the path set by the colonial authorities and his success in controlling any local attempts at deviating from it, things soon started to

move for post-prehistoric studies. This time no colonial power was able to stop it. It is believed that the circumstances of the archaeological debate in the 1950s that led to the Survey being set up caused a deep fracture in the development of the discipline. Devoting all financial and human resources to prehistory negatively affected a comprehensive development of archaeology in Malta. In fact all those involved to some degree in the Survey acquired some expertise on Maltese prehistory but they neglected all other chronological phases.

The first person to warn of the dangers of this unidirectional policy was Trump, Curator of the archaeological section of the Museum Department between 1958 and 1963 (MUS 86/58; MUS 37/58). As a locally-based English archaeologist, Trump certainly had a clear understanding of the interplay between political and cultural stances on the Maltese archaeological stage and of the fragile balance between local and overseas interests, in particular during the years of radical changes in Maltese history. In May 1962 Trump replied to two Britons (Barnett of the Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities at the British Museum and Isserlin from the Department of Semitic Languages and literatures at University of Leeds) who had requested to undertake research on Punic Malta, sharing some of his concerns:

> Something should have been done years ago. … If excavation is to be the point of attack, and there is much to be said for this, the temple site at Tas-Silġ offers far better hopes …: there is a good depth of soil, part of a colonnade was still standing to the end of the 18th century, inscriptional material has been found … (MUS 'Letters').

And a few days later he remarked: 'If anyone wants a Punic site here [i.e. Ra sir-Raheb], we have a much better one, with several feet of soil, at the other end of the island [i.e. Tas-Silġ]' (MUS 'Letters').

The points made by Trump are of great interest even if their interpretation presents some challenges. Firstly he complained about the timing of the proposal: it came late. This remark possibly mirrors his disappointment at how British academia handled the issue of Punic (and Phoenician) studies since the 1950s with the failure of the Harden and Baldacchino programme. It seems, however, that Trump suggested something further to that criticism. He had possibly learned of the Government plan to approach Italy on heritage matters and he arguably sensed the risks that such a plan involved.

Further to the timing issue, it is interesting to find in Trump's remarks a reference to a site-centred strategy to be adopted in Tas-Silġ. This was in blatant opposition to the landscape approach used in the prehistoric Survey. The single-site strategy is described as a 'point of attack'. It would be interesting to know whether Trump devised this expression himself or whether he acquired it from Barnett and Isserlin, perhaps as part of a debate on the rebirth of Phoenician-Punic archaeology in Malta. Unfortunately, without further investigation there is insufficient evidence to ascertain the origin of this expression.

For the purpose of this study however the mere use of this statement provides sufficient food for thought as it suggests a disruptive action that breaches an existing set of circumstances. Although Maltese Punic archaeology was the direct object of attack, we believe the attack was also subtly directed at the assumption of prehistoric primacy within Maltese archaeology imposed by Ward-Perkins. Did Trump personally approve this idea? The answer is in his '… there is much to be said for this' (MUS 'Letters'). Once again it is tempting to interpret this sentence

as an indirect criticism of the Survey research strategy that in real archaeological terms achieved too little and too late. The investigation strategy employed by Trump does suggest that he was critical of the methods employed in the Survey. Trump advocated the systematic excavation of a site as a core strategy for building a local stratigraphic sequence that could then be applied on a broader scale. He achieved these objectives in his investigation of the Skorba temple site in Malta in the early 1960s and at La Starza, Ariano Irpino, in Italy between 1957 and 1962 he achieved this objective (Potter and Stoddart 2001, 20).

In his letters to Barnett and Isserlin the Museum curator also warmly suggested the temple site of Tas-Silġ as the best place to strike (MUS 'Letters'). Notwithstanding Trump's attempt to trigger a prompt reaction in his colleagues, Isserlin did not visit Malta until a year later, in March 1963. This delay proved to be critical and in April Trump wrote the following lines full of dismay and irritated resignation to Isserlin:

> The Tas-Silġ business becomes more and more grotesque. Moscati has his permission to go ahead but if this is in writing no copy has reached the Museum Department. Certainly we were not consulted before and after. The Italians are being given a completely free hand with the Phoenician and Roman archaeology of Malta, with no conditions whatsoever. I gather that if I want to dig up anything Roman for the museum I would have to ask Moscati's permission. The whole business is political from first to last, no regard having been paid to archaeological consideration at all.
>
> Frankly if you wish to do anything at Zurrieq the only course now is to ask Moscati direct. It would still have to

> go through the Minister of Education but without Moscati's blessing I very much doubt if it would stand a chance. As you can gather from the above, anything we did or said from here would count for nothing with the powers that be. Similarly I trust them so little that they would be the last people to whom I should announce your discovery. Any importance of Zurrieq should be played right down until we can get your permission to work there. … Our only hope is that the Italians may show a bit more sense and fair-dealing than the Nationalist (so-called) Maltese. They could hardly show less' (MUS 'Letters': Isserlin 26 April 1963).

It is possible to identify themes in Trump's allegation, which interacted with the arrival of the *Missione*: 1) the political nature of Italian involvement; 2) the *Missione's* overwhelming power over Maltese historical archaeology; and 3) the Museum's powerless position.

Trump found it simply outrageous how the NP government and the *Missione* had politically manoeuvred the whole 'Tas-Silġ business'. Over a period of only a few months the *Missione* gained full control over Phoenician and Roman archaeology in Malta to such an extent that any decisions in these fields needed the approval of both the Minister of the Education and Moscati, the Director of the *Missione*. To use Trump's words, in this grotesque circumstance archaeology had been completely overpowered by politics and the Museum Department turned into a hopeless spectator of its own business.

Trump's allegation is sharp and accurate in many respects. As will be detailed below (5.4.3), it is unquestionable that the *Missione* had the backing of the NP Government with the Minister of Education Paris

at the forefront and it is also true that the *Missione* obtained unprecedented control over Maltese historical archaeology. Furthermore the politicised Italian involvement certainly put the Museum Department in an awkward and uncomfortable position. As Director of the Maltese institution in charge of archaeological matters, Zammit was certainly involved in this process. He provided crucial logistic and scientific support to Moscati during his visit and was instrumental in making public the Maltese authorities full approval to the project (NAM, ME 25/62). Once back in Rome, Moscati expressed his profound gratitude to Zammit for the collaboration offered and for the courtesy shown to him during his time in Malta (NAM, ME 35/63 – 19).

However, beyond institutional compliments and public proclamations of collaboration, it seems reasonable to suggest that at this stage Zammit had no real power of veto, but was largely complying with decisions taken at the highest political level. Zammit's stance on the Italian expedition will be considered again later in this chapter (5.4.3). For the time being it is beyond doubt that the way in which the whole business evolved did not please Trump. However, inferring that his feelings were broadly shared at the Museum takes us too far away from the data. It is tempting to think that others at the Museum did not share the intensity of Trump's feelings of frustration and discontent at witnessing this sudden new course in Maltese archaeology.

In fact only one other scholar was found who shared the same feelings of consternation and sharp disappointment. In the aftermath of the first Italian campaign in Tas-Silġ (4.2.1), Ward-Perkins in a letter to Sir Mortimer Wheeler (at that time, Secretary of the British Academy) labelled it 'an attack on one of the few remaining excavable sites in Malta, accompanied by a barrage of publicity highly nationalistic in tone. Those who have seen the excavation will appreciate that the word

"attack" is used advisedly […]' and the results 'tendentious and half-baked nonsense, comparable to that classic of pre-war Fascist archaeological ineptitude, Ugolini's Malta e le origini della Civilta' Mediterranea. The proper answer to this sort of thing is to show how it should be done, which Evans's publication is well calculated to do' (BSR 484b1). Ward-Perkins despised the Italians for their aggressive approach to the deposit in Tas-Silġ (Figure 5-1) and dismissed the first results from the fieldwork as 'tendentious and half-baked nonsense' (BSR 484b1) in line with the politically distorted conclusions of their compatriot Ugolini. The response to the biased and unskilled approach to archaeology shown by generations of Italians is once again the Survey. As mentioned above, it is not convincing that Trump shared the same high expectations regarding the Survey's impact and it is rather possible he identified it as the main weakness of British archaeological policy in Malta.

Figure 5-1: Pictures taken during the first *Missione* campaign in 1963 (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

The Italian assault: a legacy

The link between the site of Tas-Silġ and the rhetoric of attack is a theme that holds a certain appeal over time. In particular, the concept of an Italian attack proved to be particularly successful and was not abandoned when Malta's colonial experience ended. As already mentioned, the concept of 'attack' was firstly used in Trump's letter of 1962, where the term was adopted to mark a change in the development of research in Malta when prompt action would have consigned the site to the British as the Italian attack did not take place until the following year (MUS 'Letters'). In 1963 Trump clearly gives the sense of an aggressive and politically driven course of events that led to the *Missione* controlling Maltese historic archaeology. In 1964 Ward-Perkins openly used the

rhetorical term of attack to describe how the Italians had seized control, backed as they were by the NP. In Ward-Perkins' view the circumstances that led to the Italians excavating Tas-Silġ offended the entire archaeological discipline. Over and above these more obvious reasons, the Italian attack was perceived to be an assault against colonial management of the Islands' archaeology. Ward-Perkins' words mirrored the sense of frustrating impotence of the colonial authority in the face of an abrupt breach of the rules.

Well after Maltese Independence, another Briton, Dr Antony Luttrell, also took up the theme of Italian assault. This use is believed not to be accidental and can be directly linked to the discourse developed at the beginning of the 1960s by British archaeologists. A brief review of Luttrell's scholarly career reveals that he was the Rome Scholar at the British School at Rome between 1956 and 1958 and later Assistant Director and Librarian at the School between 1967 and 1973. In 1973, he moved to Malta where he lectured at the Department of History, Royal University of Malta, until 1976. In the 1979-1980 academic year he was at the Royal University of Malta as Visiting Lecturer (Gervers 2007, 1-2). Luttrell studied medieval Malta intensively in those decades, including the excavation works on the late-medieval churches at of Ħal Millieri in the mid-1970s (Blagg et al. 1990).

While lecturing in Malta in 1975, Luttrell edited the first collection of studies on Medieval Malta (Luttrell 1975). In presenting the different approaches to the study of the Middle Ages in the archipelago, Luttrell praised the 1960s *Missione* excavations as a worthy exception to the general absence of archaeological investigation on the medieval period (Luttrell 1975). However, he very subtly questioned the methods applied and the lack of final reports from the *Missione*. In a carefully worded account he maintained that:

> the lavish and prompt preliminary accounts make it clear that large-scale excavation, in what may be called the traditional style, can produce valuable information concerning the period before 1200 for which the sources are otherwise so meagre; they also suggest that is futile to demand first-class stratigraphy from thin soil disturbed by generations of Maltese farmers (Luttrell 1975, 12).

Luttrell's diplomatic manners can be explained by the fact that the *Missione* was at that time still a very well-regarded scientific institution in Malta. Furthermore a series of three specific circumstances might have suggested to handle this issue with care: 1) Cagiano himself had contributed a paper to the volume edited by Luttrell (Cagiano 1975, 88-95); 2) Ciasca had 'most kindly' (Luttrell 1975, 12) offered to show him around the Tas-Silġ site and the convent warehouse; and 3) a final assessment of the scientific validity of the *Missione* research needed to wait until the final report on the excavations was published (Luttrell 1975, 12/n. 80). Luttrell (1991, 39-41) abandoned this diplomatic tone and overtly expressed his resentment towards the *Missione's modus operandi* in another collective work published after the First International Colloquium on the History of the Central Mediterranean held at the University of Malta in 1989. He described the beginning of the *Missione's* activities in 1963 as 'the first significant assault on medieval historiography' registered in Malta. Cagiano 'did much for the development of medieval archaeology in Italy but […] belonged to a generation which still sought primarily to uncover objects and to identify inscriptions and graffiti' (Luttrell 1991).

The *Missione* was now a ghost from the past. Luttrell accused the Italian team of a 'careless' approach to 'stratigraphy': in this lack of

methodological rigour it ‘consumed much of those areas in which excavation was likely to prove fruitful’ and made very little effort to date post-classical pottery. Given that, it is likely that ‘no final report interpreting the operations of the Missione will be issued’ and the only hope is that the findings unearthed by the *Missione* will be made available to other scholars (Luttrell 1991).

Luttrell’s remarks on the lack of attention paid to stratigraphy and the still pending final report cannot surprise. Moreover the *Missione* was not new to sharp debates over some of the interpretations of the post-Roman phases. Already in the 1960s Cagiano’s hypothesis that the Apostle Paul had stayed in the Roman villa unearthed at San Pawl Milqi had triggered a lively discussion (6.3.5). Cagiano’s interpretations of the Muslim and post-Muslim occupations of Tas-Silġ with a mosque located within the temple itself and a post-Muslim church in the temple’s courtyard (Cagiano de Azevedo 1975, 88-95) was also rejected and not only by Luttrell (Luttrell 1976, 34, 1991, 39-41; Buhajar 1991, 14-15).

Having said that, the way Luttrell stigmatized the Missione’s research and the timing of his delivery seem to reflect a strategy of discredit that goes beyond any scientific argument. His affiliation to certain cultural circles possibly played a role in forming such extremely negative opinions. It is tempting to see an impact of his study and work experiences at the British School at Rome where he learned of the infamous attack perpetuated by the Italians, which he later retaliated into an assault on medieval historiography. Luttrell delivered his message at the right moment when the *Missione’*s reputation was at low ebb and possibly before a receptive audience.

Inefficient British plans

Luttrell and Ward-Perkin's both criticised the Italians' unskilled and biased approach to archaeology, which can be considered an attack and in the meantime their writings show a paternalistic British attitude. The project at Ħal Millieri for Luttrell and the Survey for Ward-Perkins are answers to Italian clumsiness and evidence to how things should be properly done in archaeology. Although the Survey was 'well calculated' to give 'the proper answer' in terms of best archaeological practice (BSR 484b1), it demonstrated very little and too late. (5.3.3) Despite his confident attitude, Ward-Perkins was well aware of this when comparing Italian and the British archaeological activities in Malta, he admitted that 'the Italians have one sound point, namely that archaeologically we have very little to show for 150 years of British rule' (BRS 484b1).

The issue of Britain's negligible archaeological impact in their Maltese colony is not a new theme within British academia, namely at the British School at Rome. At the beginning of the 1900s the then Director of the School, Thomas Ashby envisaged an element of risk in the German interest in Maltese archaeology. Given that Malta was a Crown colony and the only British possession in that part of the Mediterranean, it was essential to keeping the discipline firmly in British hands (Vella and Gilkes 2001, 361).

In 1936, Ugolini's death marked the occasion for urging a full and active British involvement in the promising field of Maltese prehistory that had been neglected to such a degree as to allow Ugolini's book 'to be represented as authoritative' (Vella and Gilkes 2001, 371-372). As has been previously noted, the British answer to such urging was the Survey project, which was delayed to such an extent that the information it provided was ineffective, despite all the efforts and resources employed for the purpose.

What is relevant here is not the British contribution to Maltese archaeology, which was intense and valuable beyond the Survey's project (Peet 1910; Ashby *et al.* 1913; Potter and Stoddart 2001, 8-9; Skeates 2010, 58-62), but rather its political impact. The British failed to use the discipline as an effective political tool for reaffirming their ownership of the Islands. The underlying idea is that the British were best equipped to exploit Maltese archaeological resources in virtue of the archipelago's colonial status. This colonial paradigm never worked particularly well in Malta and lost all its power when Malta under the NP Government made its way towards independence, and strengthened already solid political and cultural ties with its neighbour, Italy.

5.4.3 The growth of Italian influence

Paris, Cagiano, and Zammit.

What made the Italian expedition at Tas-Silġ an undisputable success was its well-calculated political strategy. It would be misleading, however, to confine the analysis to the governmental level: the Tas-Silġ project was first and foremost the successful outcome of a series of personal connections. It was at this level that some of the crucial decisions were made. At the root of this political and cultural success there were two important figures: Paris, the Maltese Minister of Education and Cagiano, from the Catholic University of Milan.

Paris, the political lynchpin of the entire operation, had the proactive support of the Italian Consul, Onofrio Messina who very ably manoeuvred an Italo-Maltese political rapprochement prior to independence, endorsing Mintoff's plan of integration with Italy, after the failure of the agreement with Britain (5.2.3) (Frendo 2000, 328-354). Paris never concealed his pro-Italian sentiments and as Minister of Education in the NP government, he used every institutional resource

available to promote strong ties with Italy. In 1963 his devotion to the Italian cause in Malta was recognized: the Italians awarded him a gold medal for his services in the fields of education and culture. Despite his overt partisan stance and his view on Maltese colonial years as martyrdom, in British eyes he was never a real danger to colonial interests (Frendo 2000, 338-356). However, as far as it concerns the politics of archaeology, this apparently harmless NP member badly damaged British interests. In this sense the colonial establishment greatly underestimated his impact on British fortunes.

Cagiano, the Italian counterpart to Paris, was not a politician, but an academic. His personal relationship with Malta was one of the key factors to the *Missione'*s success. As Moscati pointed out on the 9th of April 1963, the agreements reached with the Maltese Government were, without doubt, the direct result of Cagiano's successful scientific achievements and his political lobbying. Moscati also believed that negotiations went particularly smoothly once the Maltese authorities had been reassured that Cagiano would be personally involved in the *Missione* project (Pos. IVO/B 11 – Prot. 317; Prot. 289).

Cagiano built his ties with Malta in the 1950s. He visited the archipelago in 1956 and delivered a lecture at the Royal University (Times of Malta, 27 October, 1962). He also had the chance to visit the most important archaeological monuments on the archipelago (Bonello *et al.* 1964, 17; Cagiano de Azevedo 1958, 58-69). At the time Cagiano was full Professor of Greek and Roman Archaeology and History of Art at the Catholic University in Milan. He had previously held the post of officer (*funzionario*) at the ICR (*Istituto Centrale per il Restauro* - Central Institute for Restoration). According to the late Director of the *Missione*, Rossignani, it is likely that the connection between Cagiano and Malta developed in the context of the already solid tie between the

two countries in the field of conservation (Rossignani emails 8th and 13th November 2007).

In the post-war era, Italy made its experts and facilities available for the restoration of some of the most significant Maltese masterpieces. In the mid-1950s, the ICR restored the two famous Caravaggio paintings The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist and St Jerome, in St. John's Co-Cathedral in Valletta. The paintings were transferred to Rome for the restoration work. In 1957, the freshly restored masterpieces were exhibited in the Auberge de Provence in Valletta to great public acclaim (Gambin 2003, 29). The context of Cagiano's link is possibly more articulated. It may have involved the relationships between the Maltese Church, the Catholic University of Milan, and some personalities at the Royal University of Malta. At the forefront for their pro-Italian sentiments were the Head of the Department of Italian, Di Pietro and Mgr. Prof Edward Coleiro doyen of Classical studies and Head of the Department of Latin and Classical Studies (Frendo 2000, 348, 354-5).

Cagiano returned to Malta in 1962. The circumstances of his second trip are recorded in detail. Paris officially invited him to provide scientific advice to the government on the management and conservation of the islands' archaeological heritage (MUS 62/62; NAM, ME 110/62 - 3). The visit of the Italian professor was 'a long felt necessity to review the position obtained in Malta with regard to Archaeology' (NAM, ME 110/62-3). What needed to be revised was probably the direction imposed on the discipline by the colonial decision makers. The same message is implied in the interview given by Cagiano to the Times of Malta during his visit. He stressed the need to widen existing knowledge of historic archaeology up to the Muslim conquest (Times of Malta, 27 October 1962).

During this visit Cagiano certainly had the opportunity to gather precious information about Maltese archaeology and he was able to visit the most significant sites of the archipelago with Zammit as his guide. Using information obtained from Zammit and Paris and the dictates of his scholarly interests, Cagiano was able to identify the most promising sites for fresh research projects in historic archaeology. Back in Italy, Cagiano summarized his findings in the Report on the Antiquities of Malta that was delivered to the Minister of Education by the end of January 1963 (NAM, ME 25/62 – 2). Among other items, this document listed the sites worthy of research, divided in different categories. The first category included the most important sites in Cagiano's opinion: Tas-Silġ, San Pawl Milqi and Ras-il-Wardija in Gozo all of which became the *Missione* sites a few months later (NAM, ME 25/62 – 2).

With regard to the Marsaxlokk area, Cagiano directed his attention to the area of the Tas-Silġ site (Bir Riqa field). Based on the evidence then available, he emphasised the exceptional importance of this archaeological site. He reported the presence of a partially excavated shrine, of a wide pre-Roman terrace that had probably been designed to accommodate a sacred building, of several ancient wells and of a huge amount of potsherds, some of which had Punic engravings. Cagiano drew the preliminary conclusion that this site could possibly be identified with one of the famous Punic temples of Malta (NAM, ME 25/62 – 2). Cagiano suggested that a well-organized team from Italy should carry out a challenging and long-lasting research project at the Tas-Silġ site (NAM, ME 25/62 – 2). Zammit in submitting his remarks about the Report to the Minister of Education, stressed again the opportunity of involving 'the well organized expedition as recommended

by Cagiano … which, it is hoped will come over to Malta in the very near future to excavate the Tas-Silġ site …' (MUS 12/63).

The foreign element at the Museum Department: an Italian failure

Cagiano suggested that an Italian archaeologist should have been engaged at the Museum Department in accordance with the arrangements previously adopted for the prehistoric excavations (NAM, ME 25/62 – 1:7). The reference to Trump is clear and Cagiano's equation was quite simple: Prehistory would remain a British fiefdom and History would become an Italian one. The British had put their own man at the Museum to liaise with British prehistory research and now the Italians would do the same for historic archaeological research. With regard to this paradigm of divided archaeology, it is worthwhile focusing on the circumstances of Trump's appointment to the Museum (Skeates 2010, 60-61). It suggests, once again, that political decision making drove archaeological debate in those crucial years of Maltese history.

When Zammit succeeded Baldacchino as director of the Museum Department in 1955, the post of Curator of the archaeological section of the Museum became vacant (MUS 86/58). At the beginning of 1956, an official notice advertised the post, inviting potential candidates to submit their applications to the attention of the Director of Museum (Government 1956, 121-123). In 1957, the post was still vacant as none of the local candidates held all the required qualifications. During a Parliamentary inquiry, the Government announced its plan to engage a foreign archaeologist to train a suitable person for the post of curator (Times of Malta, 22 November, 1957, 9). As Zammit revealed, the idea was specifically to appoint 'an expert archaeologist of Italian nationality' who would have been directly responsible to the Minister of Education (MUS 9/57).

The idea of employing a foreign expert to train the Museum Curator can possibly be explained with the need to search abroad for skills that were not available locally. However, the choice of an archaeologist of Italian nationality should most likely be linked to the broader political circumstances. As early as 1956, the perspective of Malta integration into the United Kingdom started to weaken (5.2.2). With the publication of a Defence White Paper in April 1957 and the prospect of a substantial reduction of the Maltese dockyard workforce the relationships with Britain, already strained, deteriorated sharply. This circumstance worked to the advantage of Italy, as the Maltese government then attempted to approach it as an alternative to the UK. The idea of appointing an Italian expert collapsed when an alternative solution was found in 1958 as Zammit himself confirmed. Attempts to engage a foreign archaeologist had 'culminated in the arrival of Dr. David Trump, Ph.D. (Cantab.), M.A. (Cantab.), on a 3-year appointment (with a further 2 possible years extension) as Curator of the Archaeological Section of the National Museum.' It is important to find 'the local person to train with and under Trump so as to be in a position to take over on the termination of [Trump's] engagement' (MUS 86/58 - 2).

Trump's appointment prompted a political reaction. A Parliament Question (PQ 506 reported by Vassallo – *New Commonwealth* on 17th December 1958) inquired into the missed opportunity of employing 'local talent' (MUS 86/58). As in the case of the Italian expert, Trump's appointment clearly mirrored Maltese political circumstances: it occurred when Malta was ruled directly by a British Colonial Governor after a state of emergency had been proclaimed (letter no. 2908/Treas. 1555/58). In addition to the favourable political context Trump's personal connection with the

British School at Rome (Trump 1963: 1) would certainly have made his candidacy even more appealing.

Trump held the position at the Museum from 1958 until 1963. It is known that in 1963 Zammit welcomed Cagiano's proposal of an Italian expert to work on the known Maltese Punic and Roman sites and to act as 'Liaison Officer' between the Museum Department and the *Missione*. Zammit also pointed out that the designate Curator of Archaeology, Mallia, who was about to finish his training at the Institute of Archaeology in London, would have supported the Italian archaeologist in his job. Mallia took up his duties when Trump's contract ended in November 1963 (MUS 12/63), but Trump obtained paid leave until March 1964 (MUS 37/58) and this made it financially unviable to appoint an Italian archaeologist (MUS 37/58). This second failure to place an Italian at the Museum did not hinder relations between the Missione and the Museum. At the end of the day, with the appointment of Mallia as Curator of Archaeology, the controversy about the expatriate expert was forgotten. It can be noticed, however, that Mallia was taught by Evans during his time at the Institute of Archaeology (Skeates 2010, 61); this possibly maintained a strong link between Museum and former ruler, at least on prehistoric matters.

The power of direct action

In March 1963, a couple of months after Cagiano's Report, the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially assigned the *Missione* in Malta to the Institute of Near Eastern Studies, under Moscati's directorship (Pos. B 11 Prot. 289). At the beginning of the following month, the *Missione* director offered to send an archaeological expedition to carry out excavations at Tas-Silġ, San Pawl Milqi, and Ras-il-Wardija in Gozo 'in the frame of the fruitful cultural relationships between Malta and Italy'

(NAM, ME 25/62). The positive answer of the Maltese authorities was so rapid that the main points of the agreement between the *Missione* and Malta were defined in a few days.

Moscati arrived in Malta on the 2nd of April for a short visit (NAM, ME 35/63). On the 4th of April, Zammit submitted the draft of a press release on the planned Italian expedition to Paris for his approval. Moscati and the Italian Consul agreed upon beforehand the content of the press release. The note announced the forthcoming arrival of an Italian team to study the Phoenician, Punic and Roman periods. It also stressed that the team would work in cooperation with the Museum Department and that the results of the excavations would be published on a regular basis, bringing 'Malta still further to the notice of archaeologists and historians throughout the world' (NAM, ME 25/62).

While Moscati was still in Malta, Paris formally submitted the proposal of the Italian expedition to the Prime Minister, explicitly stressing the urgency of the matter. Borġ Olivier gave his approval on the same day, promising 'full cooperation of the competent Maltese authorities' (NAM, ME 25/62). Despite all the politics involved, the key factor in explaining the Italian 'attack' on Tas-Silġ was the relationship between Zammit and Cagiano (Bonello *et al*. 64, 17). It is likely that the Director would have alerted the Italian professor to a British interest in the site. There is however no documentary evidence to confirm this hypothesis but, it is known that on April 15th 1963 Cagiano, as newly appointed Director of the excavations, wrote to Zammit on the successful conclusion of the agreements on the Italian excavations stating: 'As you can see we haven't slept and everything went as planned' (*Come vede non abbiamo dormito e tutto ora e' felicemente in porto*) (NAM, ME 25/62 – 14). This can be interpreted as a reference to the Italians not wasting time in acting upon Zammit's advice. This

makes the position of the Museum Director even more complex to interpret. Was he a passive and possibly reluctant paper-pusher as Trump seems to imply (MUS 'Letters': Isserlin 26 April 1963), or was he an aware player as the link with Cagiano may suggest (NAM, ME 25/62; Bonello *et al*. 64, 17). This is impossible to state conclusively.

What follows is a final discussion of the most relevant outcomes of the analysis set against some of the key theoretical points of this research (Chapter 2).

5.5 Discussion

5.5.1 A colonial paradigm

This chapter has tackled the management of Maltese archaeology imposed by British colonial authority. The circumstances of the Malta Ancient Monuments Survey and the concurrent attempt to revitalize the Phoenician and Punic studies are extremely telling in this respect. They show how asymmetries of power generated by the colonial control of the discipline are established and maintained and how voices of dissent are marginalized and silenced (2.2).

The Survey in particular is a strong statement of power to correct the drift taken by the archaeological debate following Ugolini's claims on Maltese prehistory. Malta was part of British territory and consequently any activity carried out in Malta required British approval, even more so archaeology because with its engagement with material past as main sources of knowledge, this discipline is physically tied to a territory.

Not less importantly is the power of archaeology in shaping collective identities. The circumstances of the Phoenician and Punic research promoted by the Museum Director show how colonial authority needs to maintain a strict hierarchy of power-relations to ensure the

status quo. Ward-Perkins in halting this project exerted a power that went beyond Maltese shores: it mirrored in an archaeological perspective the extent to which British colonial power was deployed to directly control overseas possessions. It can be argued that Baldacchino himself used connections with British academia to set up his project. This however is not surprising as the small colony outsourced most of the archaeologists working there and at that time it would have seemed logical to choose a British academic. Foreign influence was not the issue here, but rather a local initiative that did not support a plan set up at the highest colonial level. This was unacceptable when the local expert in question was Maltese, held a powerful position, and was not an enthusiastic supporter of the Survey project. In Ward-Perkins' view dealing with Maltese people was *per se* a risky business, as their unreliable and changeable colonial attitude made them difficult to control. Even more so when the prospect of independence gained momentum and Italy offered an appealing alternative to British control over Maltese archaeology.

Italy played a crucial role in defining this ambivalent relation of Malta with its ruler, threatening the balance of power carefully set by the colonial authority. It has been largely addressed (Grima 2005, 51; Vella and Gilkes 2001; Pessina and Vella 2009) how the archaeological debate in Malta has been fundamentally shaped by Italo – British antagonism and mistrust. As this chapter shows the attempt to include a non-British element in the Survey project failed simply because the only suitable person for the task was Italian and this was enough to make the idea unworkable (5.3.2).

In dealing with this set of circumstances, the British School at Rome emerged as the long arm of the colonial authority on Maltese archaeological matters and, one can reasonably postulate, on the entire

Western Mediterranean. However the role of the British School at Rome in connection with British rule in the Mediterranean deserves specific investigation. Based on the evidence gathered for this research, it emerges that the British School has always been at the forefront in ringing the alarm on foreign interference in the Islands' archaeology. It was the same school that set up the British answers to these intrusions. This prestigious institution also provided the only successful non-local candidate to the post of Archaeological Curator at the Museum Department, Trump.

The demise of British control over Maltese archaeology is due to a series of combined factors that this analysis has untangled. The rise of the *Missione* is no doubt one of them. The rhetoric of the Italian attack shows all its power when considered from the perspective of a colonial-driven discipline. The Italian control over the Islands historical archaeology introduces a crucial element of instability to an already weaken system of power.

5.5.2 A post-colonial paradigm?

The institution of the *Missione* mirrors in archaeological terms Maltese political proximity to Italy in the early 1960s. From this perspective, this was a post-colonial turn. The Italian-Maltese encounter occurred without colonial interference and was driven by reciprocal interest and mutual dependency. These are core ingredient of non-colonial encounters. As Gosden (2004) argues, in presenting the notion of middle-ground as elaborated by Richard White in relation to the fur trade in the Great Lakes between 17th and 19th centuries, the reciprocity of interest between Europeans and indigenous community ensured a balanced relationship based on mutual material dependency. This middle-ground broke up with the end of commercial exchanges and the imposition of a proper

domination system that identified indigenous people as colonial subjects (Gosden 2004, 172-174). Those principles can be effectively translated to the specific circumstances of this case study. On the one side there was the democratically elected, local Government and on the other a foreign team guided by the doyen of Phoenician studies, Moscati that cannot ask for a better occasion to reinforce his name overseas and at home. From a Maltese perspective, the *Missione* was instrumental in turning the status of archaeology, as imposed by the colonial authority.

The subversive nature of this plan well suits in a pattern of transition from a colonial to a post-colonial position. However, in addressing this point one cannot ignore the fact that the *Missione* came from Italy, traditionally the direct alternative to British archaeology in Malta (Grima 2005; Vella and Gilkes 2001), and that Malta is a polarized country. So as has happened many times in Maltese history (Frendo 1991; 1992; 2000) it was not Malta as a unified entity, but a part of it, that led the change. This part was the pro-Italian establishment that happened to control the country in those years (Frendo 1991) and supported the *Missione* operation. This finding goes beyond colonial-postcolonial arguments and sits comfortably in an existing local pattern of political and cultural division.

Paradoxically, the *Missione* activity appears to be a post-colonial statement in political terms, but not quite so in archaeological terms. In this perspective and following a scheme already identified in Cyprus (Knapp and Antoniadou 1998) the *Missione* replaced the British as leaders of the archaeological debate. It moved away from prehistoric and landscape studies, as promoted by Ward-Perkins and the British School at Rome (Potter and Stoddart 2001, 8-9; 23-24), and promoted a monument-centred historical approach. Those circumstances somehow

contravene the paradigm of a single European approach in making archaeological abroad as set for the Middle East (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004). In Malta the politically driven control of archaeology passed into Italian hands and it is difficult to see this as an achievement in terms of cultural self-determination for Malta. However a light of this can perhaps be detected in the relationship between the *Missione* and the Museum Department. After almost a decade of debate around the foreign expert at the Museum, the appointment of Mallia and the emerging Maltese post-colonial identity made this issue out of date. The Museum Department was firmly in Maltese hands with the Director (Zammit) and the Archaeological Curator (Mallia), recently returned from UCL. The relationship between the competent local authority and the Italian expedition could be managed without a middleman. Having said that, it remains unclear how balanced and straightforward this relationship was, particularly given the overarching political control of the discipline.

The Italian expedition epitomizes in archaeological terms Malta's transition from colonial to post-colonial status. In reality the Italians replaced the British in dictating which past matters for Malta. The shift here is from colonial archaeology to archaeology by foreigners and it has been observed (2.5) how difficult is to categorize this type of enterprise and how easily archaeology by foreigners can be perceived as expression of material and intellectual neo-colonialism. These issues will be addressed in the following chapters. For the time being, it can be observed that paradoxically colonial control of the archaeological discipline was subtler, as it manoeuvred contextually from the outside and the inside and as such it cannot perceive as an external imposition. Conversely *Missione* has always been a foreign expedition. In developing this point this research owes a debt of gratitude to one of the interviewees (4C) that made clear the distinction between British

individualism and *Missione* teamwork. In his words 'It wasn't centred around one personality. It was called 'Missione'. As I said this is not to belittle some very great contributors to Maltese archaeology but it is true which is why it lasts so long because transcended a single personality even though great personalities have been involved'. This distinction is crucial to understanding the complex relationship between the *Missione*, Tas-Silġ, and Malta. The next chapters will address this complexity.

5.6 Conclusions

This chapter presented the development of the archaeological debate during the closing chapter of Maltese colonial ruling as part of the British Empire. It was noted that politics of archaeology in the 1950s and early 1960s was greatly influenced by the broader political scenario. Against the Maltese *leitmotive* of independence/integration, while the British colonial government struggled to maintain full political control over the colony, Italy was narrowing the gap with its neighbour. This chapter tackled this turbulent and fast-evolving period in Maltese history from an archaeological perspective.

The archaeological debate was at first dominated by the research path imposed by colonial authority as mean to reaffirm British control over prehistory after a dangerously popular Italian research season. The twin perspective on landscape and prehistory of the Survey project, as advocated by the British School at Rome Director Ward-Perkins, seemed the winning receipt to reinstate colonial control over the discipline. However due to a series of combined factors only partially internal to the archaeological debate, an inverse research approach proved to be successfully. This was the approach promoted by the newly established *Missione*: a monument-centred and intensive research that in a relatively short time rewrote important chapters of Maltese ancient

history. In the next chapter it will be detailed how the *Missione* approach was also tool of power.

Chapter 6 **Making archaeology and shaping identities**

6.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, the political and archaeological circumstances that underpinned the rise of the *Missione* as a leading force in the Maltese archaeological debate and the start of the excavations at Tas-Silġ have been addressed. This chapter builds from this background and investigates the intertwined existence of the archaeological entity of Tas-Silġ and of the *Missione*. More accurately, it looks into the making of the facts presented in Chapter 4 and it gives voice to the entities involved in the process, highlighting their complex trails of association. Both institutional and individual voices play a part into the composition of this account. Not to mention, among the others, my personal voice.

This chapter is divided into three sections, which combine a thematic and chronological narrative. In this way, essential analytical tools that will be used to unravel the complexity of the phenomenon under study will be provided. The first section, titled 'A Perfect Plan' (6.3) critically explores the first research season at Tas-Silġ (1963-1971). It shows how the *Missione* established itself as the most accredited research entity for Maltese historical archaeology. Using its political and cultural primacy, the *Missione* produced a grand archaeological narrative and shaped the identity of Tas-Silġ. The *Missione* not only boosted Italian archaeological prestige overseas, but it also provided essential material for the construction of the Maltese past, as endorsed by the Nationalists. This section, then, offers an analysis of the ways in which this material has been deployed in shaping the islands' distinctive past. In doing so it addresses crucial issues about the negotiation of national

identity in Malta, as it has evolved away from a long period of colonial history.

The section titled Invisible Players (6.4) considers the difficult phase of the Tas-Silġ project characterized by the end of on-site investigations. Far removed from the public eye and from the celebratory rhetoric of the 1960s, the meticulous study of the excavated material proceeded at a slow and steady pace until the 1980s. Then, for reasons devoid of scientific considerations, it was abruptly brought to an end. The circumstances surrounding the *Missione* withdrew are crucial, even if mostly unknown. The analysis specifically focuses on this phase and on the role played by a handful of individuals in managing the consequences of the Italians' decision.

The last section titled Between continuity and break: a burdensome legacy (6.5) focuses on the second *Missione*, started in the 1990s from the ashes of the original *Missione*. Its activities were resumed on the thread of the link with the past. This notion legitimised the *Missione'*s smooth return to the Maltese archaeological scene, restored its scientific authority and defined the objectives of a new phase of activities. The new team presented itself as the updated version of the 1960s *Missione*: a thoroughly Italian research entity committed to concluding what the first *Missione* had not managed to finish. To this end, it adopted state of the art investigative methods and new research strategies. Accepting this legacy, however, also meant taking responsibilities for activities and events that occurred in the past. This section shows how in resuming their research at Tas-Silġ the *Missione* under-estimated the impact of this burdensome legacy in contemporary Malta.

The data sources that this chapter draws on are archival material, interviews, casual conversations with key-informants and my

personal memories. The material is all intertwined to substantiate this account. Although serious attempt is made to ensure a balance in the use of a variety of sources to substantiate the narration throughout the chapter, this has not always possible. This is particularly clear in the shift from the 1960s phase of archaeological research (A Perfect Plan) and the post-excavation period (Invisible Players): in the first part interviews data integrate a picture mainly drawn on archival material, which significantly prevails in the account. The second part, conversely, is marked by a substantial lack of documentary material as the title 'Invisible Players' suggests. The narration here is built on few documentary facts around which populate the recollections of actors and key-informants. This element necessary produces a change in the narrative pattern and a greater need to rely on the way people recalled certain facts. In addition to availability of data, the nature of the facts produces different narrative effects. While the 1960s section is history and benefits from clarity of distance with hindsight, the phase of ongoing research (Between continuity and break: a burdensome legacy) offers the complexity of details as it was experienced by the interviewees and myself.

Before addressing the specific issues sketched above, this chapter gives an account of the certain political circumstances of Malta since independence.

6.2 A post-colonial history

6.2.1 The NP and the independence settlement

The celebration of Independence was inaugurated at midnight on the 21 September 1964 with the symbolic lowering of the Union Jack and the raising of the Maltese flag. The same day the Duke of Edinburgh handed over the constitutional instruments to the Maltese Prime Minister, who

officially declared Malta independent in front of a packed crowd filled with excitement (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 302-3). The British Monarch, locally represented by the Governor General, remained Head of State until 1974 when parliament voted to replace him with a democratically elected Maltese President, whose functions largely mirrored those previously performed by the Governor General (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 371). The NP government guided by Borġ Olivier guided Malta for two full terms from 1964 to 1971 during which time it faced a series of challenging issues, first and foremost the renegotiation of the defence and financial package agreed by the British as part of the independence settlement (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 313-4; De Marco 2007).

The publication of a New Defence White Paper in 1966 did not ease the already strained relation between the two countries. In 1967 the announced defence cuts triggered a new Anglo-Maltese crisis. The proposed spending cuts would have led to a drastic and sudden reduction of the British forces on Maltese territory, badly affecting the local economy (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 316). Borġ Olivier claimed that this prospect was overtly in breach of the agreement stipulated in 1964, as it would have failed to comply with its fundamental principles of mutual assistance and defence. He sought to postpone the run-down for two years, but eventually he had to accept the British prospect of slowing down the process by just one year (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 316-7).

Conversely, over the same period the relationship with Italy flourished. Following the traditional ties to the neighbouring country, the NP administration signed its first Cultural Agreement with Italy in 1967. At the beginning of the 1970s an Italo-Maltese Mixed Commission was set up in order to update the terms of this first agreement. The Commission praised the fruitful work carried out by the *Missione* and promised full support for the future development of its activities. It also

recommended the exchange of data and resources between the two countries in the fields of archaeology and restoration of historic monuments (NAM, ME 177/33-1969).

Despite the strained relationship with Britain, it is claimed (De Marco 2007) that the NP government was able to establish democracy and promote feasible economic growth by attracting foreign investments and supporting the development of a tourist industry (De Marco 2007, 89-92; 95). Borġ Olivier firmly believed in the need of securing a place for Malta in Europe and more broadly speaking in the 'West'. In those years Malta, as a former British colony, joined the Commonwealth, and as a sovereign country it opted to become a member of the United Nations and of the Council of Europe. In 1970 Borġ Olivier signed the Agreement of Association with the E.E.C. (European Economic Community).

6.2.2 The Saviour of Malta

When Mintoff won the general election in 1971, his foreign and internal policies departed sharply from the ones advocated by the former administrations. According to Mizzi (1995, 183-200) Mintoff's goals in foreign affairs were not to sever Maltese relations with the West, but rather to reduce Malta's dependence on other countries as much as possible. So, on the one hand, he sought forms of cooperation with Western countries, believing 'and not without justification, that … (this) was a moral obligation of the West towards Malta in repayment of Malta's misuse by those countries in the past' (Mizzi 1995, 183). On the other hand, he tried to establish economic and political friendships with Arab countries and with the communist bloc, first and foremost with the People's Republic of China. The relationship with neighbouring Libya started under the best auspices but it soon deteriorated.

Soon after he was elected prime minister, Mintoff forced the Nato Headquarters, hosted in Malta since the early 1950s, to be relocated to Naples. At the same time, he successfully renegotiated with Britain, in its capacity as a member of Nato, the agreement on mutual defence and financial assistance first reached in 1964. The government's aim was to guide the Maltese economy away from its traditional dependence on foreign military bases, and it made use of the seven-year annual rent from Britain as a member of Nato to achieve this goal (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 342-344; 350-3). The Anglo-Maltese defence agreement, successfully negotiated in 1972, earned Mintoff the title of Saviour of Malta, notwithstanding what De Marco (2007, 106) defines 'the mercenary element involved in the deal'.

From a different perspective this new deal marked a turning point in the problematic Maltese-British relationship after independence. It placed the country 'on a more recognizable post-colonial footing' (Smith 2006: xxxii), guiding it towards a total independence. As a matter of fact, the direct involvement of Nato in the Maltese defence and financial package testified the real end of colonial responsibility on the archipelago, which had lasted for longer than in other overseas territories because of Malta's specifically military status in British eyes (Smith 2006). When the Anglo-Maltese agreement expired in 1979, and the last British warship left the Grand Harbour, the government put into practice its policy of non-alignment and neutrality. Exploiting Malta's geographical position the MLP administration formally embraced the principles of being equidistant from the Eastern and Western blocs and it also advocated the idea of Malta as a bridge between Europe and the Arab world.

In practice Maltese's foreign policy was in several circumstances anything but neutral. Before the Maltese-Libyan crisis

(late 1970s and 1980s), Mintoff and the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi built a very close relationship sealed by joint projects and by Libyan economic and political support for the Maltese government vision. Colonel Gaddafi was the only foreign Head of State invited to celebrate Freedom Day on March 31st 1979 to mark the end of the 180-year-old British presence in Malta (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 371; 375; 402-7). The diplomatic proximity between the two countries raised concerns among NP supporters and within the Church and as early as 1972 Gonzi warned the UK and Italy about the risk of Libya replacing Britain in Malta (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 350).

At the beginning of the 1980s when the ties with Libya started to loosen, a new period started in Italian-Maltese relations. The agreement over Maltese neutrality, and the first Italo-Maltese financial protocol, were signed in two separate ceremonies held in Rome and Valletta. Italy recognized Malta's neutrality and Malta undertook not to allow foreign military forces on its soil. With regard to the economic protocol, Italy committed itself to provide Malta with financial, economic and technical assistance. The protocols were renewed in 1986 to cover the years 1987-90 and again in 1994 for the years 1995-2000. A bunkering agreement reached in 1981 between Malta and the Soviet Union, although limited to merchant vessels, was interpreted by some as a form of assistance to the Soviet Forces in the Mediterranean in sharp contrast with the Neutrality Agreement signed with Italy (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 412-3, 416-7, 435, 474; Mizzi 1995, 330).

Serious concerns arose among the Maltese opposition because of Italian support for Mintoff. Making use of its privileged relationship with the Italian Christian Democratic Party (*DC*), a Nationalist delegation manifested its discontent about the support Italy gave to Mintoff, whose domestic policy endangered Maltese democracy. The

DC claimed to share the same concerns and reassured the NP that their support was aimed at stopping Mintoff from taking extreme measures both in domestic and foreign affairs (De Marco 2007, 129).

NP concerns were not unfounded, as Mintoff did not reject the use of violence and repressive measures against opposition forces in order to achieve his political vision at home. According to De Marco (2007, 108-11) Mintoff's administration violently suppressed political liberties and freedom of expression. Independence Day was removed from the calendar of public holidays and peaceful NP manifestations for its celebration between 1971 and 1975 were marked by violence. The Government was accused of interfering heavily in the administration of justice thanks to conniving judges (De Marco 2007, 134). In 1983 the European Parliament voted a resolution calling for the suspension of EEC aid to Malta until political freedom was restored (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 423).

Mintoff's home policy had a huge impact on the development of Maltese higher education. At the end of the 1970s the government resolved to directly control the University, through the Department of Education, denying to it any sort of independent decision-making. In strong disagreement with this measure, the Director of the London School of Economics (LSE), Professor Ralf Dahrendorf, resigned from his post as adviser to the Malta Commission for Higher Education. As part of its cultural policy, the government carried out some major reforms of the University system with the closure of five out of seven faculties, removing the humanities and sciences from the academic curriculum. This forced many academics to leave the country, even if most of them were back by the end of the 1980s when, under a new NP government, the academic institution went through another reform and

the humanities and science subjects were reinstated (Frendo 1991, viii; Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 398-9).

6.2.3 Towards Europe

In 1987 the Nationalists were back in government under a freshly amended constitution (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 416-7, 423, 439-440). The key issue that dominated the 1990s political debate was the position of Malta with regard to the EU. In 1990 with the NP in power Malta submitted an application for entrance to the European Union and in 1992 the same Nationalists, who favoured full membership, won the general elections. Even if Maltese application was discussed in June at an EU meeting in Lisbon, its candidacy was deemed premature and instead it was agreed to strengthen the existing cooperation agreement (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 466).

In 1993 the European Community gave a positive report on Maltese readiness for membership, supporting its right to seek admission by citing its long history of cultural proximity to Europe and its fundamental European identity. At the same time, the report pointed out the need for an overhaul of the Maltese economic regulatory system. Furthermore the *avis* questioned the compatibility of Malta's neutral and non-aligned status with the provisions of the Maastricht Treaty. In 1994 Malta was included in the list of the next EU enlargement. However with the MLP victory in 1996 Malta opted out of the admission process, as at the time it was more interested in strengthening a multilevel cooperation with Europe than in joining the EU (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 473-5, 489).

In 1998 a dispute within the MLP led to early elections. The Nationalists returned to power and they reactivated the application for EU membership. In 2000 having fulfilled the criteria for EU

membership, Malta was formally invited to accession talks (Bonnici and Cassar 2004, 498-9,503). The referendum on EU membership was held on March 8 2003 and 53,6% of Maltese voted in favour, confirming the positive attitude of a majority of Maltese toward the idea of joining the EU. Malta formally joined the European Union on May 1st, 2004 (De Marco 2007, 235, 321).

6.3 A perfect plan

6.3.1 Making history

The first campaign in Tas-Silġ in 1963 marked the beginning 'a new chapter in the archaeological history of Malta' as proclaimed by the *Missione'*s fathers, Moscati and Cagiano to a packed audience in the Catholic Institute in Floriana at the end of the first campaign (The Sunday Times of Malta, 1 December, 1963, 9). Even now the significance of this campaign, as a watershed in the history of the archaeological discipline, is still acknowledged.

'Tas-Silġ is important for the history of archaeology in Malta in that it was the first excavation of that scale, the first excavation since when Malta became an independent country' (3A). A most fortunate interplay of political, cultural, geographical and archaeological factors underpinned this historic success:

> It is an excavation [that] arrived in a transition period for Malta from a [one] socio-political phase to another. There were signs, I personally recall, of the inevitable breaking with the British colonial inheritance with the perspective of independence and of a rapprochement with Europe. Italy was the nearest neighbour so the excavation came at just the right time. (*E' uno scavo che è arrivato in*

momento di transizione per Malta, da una fase socio-politica e culturale ad un'altra. Si sentiva già, ricordo personalmente, l'inevitabile frattura con l'eredità coloniale inglese con la prospettiva dell'indipendenza e il riavvicinamento verso l'Europa; il vicino più prossimo era l'Italia e quindi lo scavo è arrivato al momento giusto) (2A).

In this historical perspective and in compliance with what was discussed in Chapter 5, Tas-Silġ represents the material outcome of the lucky encounter between Italian interests and Maltese readiness to give a new political and scientific direction to the study of the islands' past, away from colonial interference. On one side, the local power makers backed in any possible way the success of the Italian investigations as a means of reinforcing their own internal and international position and on the other side, the *Missione* did not neglect the chance to become the main interpreter of the Islands' historic material past. The political and cultural circumstances that set the stage for this disciplinary partition and that brought to the advent of the Italians have been addressed in Chapter 5.

In the first volume of the excavation reports, the *Missione'*s promoters claimed that before the *Missione* almost a millennia and a half of history had never been scientifically studied with the exception of a few burial sites. Such circumstances clearly indicated where to open a new research path. The *Missione'*s task was then primarily to 'pierce the dark' on Punic, Roman, and Christian Malta (Cagiano 1964, 17-8; Moscati 1964, 14-5). It is worthy of notice that in celebrating their primacy in Maltese historic archaeology, they readily forgot to mention the work carried out by Ashby just 40 years earlier and published in the

JRS series under the title *Roman Malta* (Ashby 1915). This omission, if ever noticed, was certainly forgiven in Malta as it played in favour of the whole construct of the *Missione* as a unique player in the field of Maltese historic archaeology.

Even today this narrative is effectively used to assess the scientific commitment of the First campaign of the *Missione*. Italian practitioners define as 'extraordinary' its role in deepening our understanding of the post-prehistoric phases in Malta that at the time were mostly neglected (1A, 1D, 1H). As one Italian archaeologist points out, the *Missione* embarked on this monumental project:

> It opened windows never opened before on Maltese historic archaeology, although most likely driven in the choice of the sites by political motivations. (*ha aperto delle finestre mai aperte prima su quella che era l'archeologia storica maltese anche se guidata probabilmente da motivazioni politiche*) (1D).

Local professionals also highlight this point. One recalls that the excavation in Tas-Silġ was a scientific requirement:

> Investigations of an historical site had been expected for long time; this was a period largely neglected, virtually since Ashby times. (*Dal punto di vista scientifico naturalmente si aspettava un intervento su un sito storico da molto tempo; era un periodo trascurato da molto tempo, dal tempo di Ashby, praticamente*) (2A).

6.3.2 Fraternal bond and cooperation

The relationship between Malta and the Italian expedition is built around the narrative of the traditional bond between the two countries and of a

spirit of mutual support and cooperation (Figure 6-2). This became a sort of manifesto for promoting the Italian expedition in Malta across the 1960s excavations and again when the *Missione* came back in the 1990s (NAM, ME 35/63: 47,71,72,88,93; MUS 114/63: 171). The documents relating to the agreement reached on Tas-Silġ closed regularly with a note on the cultural ties between the two countries (NAM, ME 35/63: 8,9,10,11). Moscati offered to send an archaeological expedition '… in the frame of the fruitful cultural relationships between Malta and Italy' (NAM, ME 25/62).

During his first visit to Malta the value of cooperation between the Italian research entity and the Museum Department was stressed (NAM, ME 25/62) as was cooperation between the Italian researchers and the competent Maltese authorities (NAM, ME 25/62). The Minister of Education welcomed the prompt publication of the first excavation report as a powerful way of confirming the historic links between Malta and Italy (NAM, ME 35/63:54). An official dinner held at the Italian Embassy was as a further opportunity for exchanging messages of reciprocal gratitude for the successful development of the research and hopes for even brighter Italian-Maltese cultural cooperation. It is also said that the Maltese enthusiastically supported the Italian investigations (NAM, ME 35/63:82). In 1971 there was still a 'spirit of mutual understanding and respect' underpinning the annual visit of the Italian team (Times of Malta, 16 November, 1971,18). In the 1990s when the *Missione* successfully applied for a generous grant for the conservation and display of Tas-Silġ, Maltese authorities described the site 'a standing monument to the links between the archaeological traditions of Italy and of the Maltese Islands' (MUS 114/63: 171).

The Hon. Dr. A. Paris gives the first stroke of the pick to inaugurate excavations at Tas-Silġ by the Italian Archaeological Team.

Figure 6-1: The Minister of Education Paris inaugurated the excavations at Tas-Silġ (after Times of Malta, 17 October, 1963, 3).

Figure 6-2: From the left: the Minister of Education Paris, the *Missione* general director Moscati and the Museum director Zammit (file 02, *fig* 3 reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

Beyond all the written proclamations, this link is well illustrated by the picture of the Minister of Education swinging a pickaxe on the inaugural day of excavations at Tas-Silġ (Figure 6-1) (Times of Malta, 17 October, 1963, 3; Vella and Gilkes 2001). This symbolic act sealed an extremely effective season of Italo-Maltese agreements on archaeological matters. It testified once more the unconditional NP support for the *Missione* operation (Figure 6-2). The sentiments of gratitude expressed for the Italian interest in the local archaeological heritage implied a deeper appreciation for replacing Britain as the external element affecting the cultural development of the islands.

The Government endorsed the successful accomplishment of the project with proper political actions together with a specific communication strategy to gain public support. To promote local

appreciation of the Italian endeavour, the Times of Malta (22 October, 1964, 8) waxed lyrical about the *Missione*:

> Malta must be deeply thankful for the great interest which Italy […] is taking in our archaeological treasures by sending such [a] learned and competent group of savants to bring to light the still hidden relics of our noble antiquity, and thus offer further objects of pride to the Islanders and of admiration to visitors.

This short passage well epitomizes the type of rhetoric used in those years to endorse the Italian investigations. They came to Malta to boost the Islands national pride by bringing 'to light the still hidden relicts of noble antiquity' and it is hard not to see Ward-Perkins' 'barrage of publicity highly nationalistic in tone' (BRS 484b1).

The discourse of the Italian 'savants' sent to restore the Islands national pride and to diffuse new 'vivid light' on the most noble and glorious past of the archipelago is used over and over again (NAM, ME 35/63:11,93; Times of Malta. 17 October 1963, 3; 26 November 1963, 5; L-orizzont, 17 October 1963, 1).

The *Missione* employed a slightly more scientific approach to touch on the same theme. Its argument developed around the idea of helping the young Maltese state to shape its own historical past. In introducing the first report Moscati stressed that the *Missione* was in Malta to comply with the guest country wishes and aspirations (Moscati 1964, 14).

The Italian research pleased not only the NP government but also the Church (Moscati 1964, 13; 1966, 15) Strong ties with the Church in Malta undoubtedly contributed to the success of the *Missione*. Cagiano's academic affiliation with the prestigious Catholic University

of Milan has been already mentioned and his scholarly interest in Christian antiquities probably also had a pivotal role in consolidating his strong bond with the Church (5.4.3). The early Christian evidence of Pauline tradition captured Cagiano's interest and led to the choice of the San Pawl Milqi site. This decision further strengthened the already close relations with the Church that showed a vivid interest in the development of the research (Times of Malta, 1 November 1963, 9). When the decision to dig trial trenches in the area around the church of San Pawl Milqi was finally taken in June 1963, the *Missione* found it easy to obtain permission from the ecclesiastic authority that owned this land (MUS 22/63 I: 16-18,21).

The full and unconditional support of local political and religious authorities was not enough. The *Missione* also sought to establish professional links with the guest country in order to create a sense of scientific cooperation (NAM, ME 35/63: 47, 54, 71, 72, 88, 93). Although the *Missione* was utterly Italian, it highly valued cooperation with Maltese scholars. Local experts contributed to the research from the beginning of the *Missione'*s activities. On a specifically archaeological level, the *Missione* wanted to reinforce its relations with the Museum Department. In setting up the working plan, Moscati and Cagiano warmly invited Zammit to become a regular member of the research team, either as field Co-director, adviser or Museum representative. As they pointed out, what really mattered was that he was involved in the research work and that his name appeared as part of the team. Zammit welcomed this request and opted for the title of representative of the Museum Department. In this role, he probably took part in on-site activities (Pos IVO B11 Prot. 326; MUS 22/63I – 18, 19, 25; Cagiano 1964, 17). The archaeological curator, Mallia, personally studied the prehistoric evidence from the site and his name appears among the

contributors in the preliminary *Missione* reports for the years 1964 and 1965 (Mallia 1965, 73-76; 1966, 49-52).

6.3.3 High-speed archaeological intervention in the making

Although the *Missione* phenomenon first took shape within the political domain, it did not take long for it to be filled with archaeological contents. Cagiano was appointed Scientific Director of the *Missione* and he was pivotal in defining the main interpretative lines on which the identity of the site was built in the 1960s. He was spokesperson of the *Missione* on scientific matters together with Antonia Ciasca principal archaeologist and coordinator of the research at Tas-Silġ since 1963. Completely different was the role of the other *Missione* promoter, Moscati with his charismatic and powerful public profile. As it was for the institution of *Missione*, Cagiano and Moscati complementary job was crucial in establishing *Missione* as archaeological and political success.

The potential of the site in the context of the islands' Punic archaeology was well known before the *Missione*. Without going too far back in time, Trump was well aware of this and suggested a fresh British investigation there (5.4.2). In pointing at Tas-Silġ as a likely location of 'one of the famous Punic temples of Malta', (Cagiano 1963, 5) Cagiano distilled the information gathered in Malta during his official visit in 1962 (5.4.3).

Although the archaeological relevance of the deposit at Tas-Silġ was already known, this had certainly not been unveiled and communicated to the outside world. The *Missione* was given the chance to do this and did it impeccably. Excavation work lasted eight years and the *Missione* successfully combined an extremely rapid excavation pace with effective interpretations of the information obtained. The

excavation work brought to light most of the features that defined the materiality of the site and fundamentally shaped its archaeological identity (4.2.1).

When the *Missione* began works in 1963 it set about creating a grand interpretation using a narrative that made use of the sensational and the unexpected. This interpretation took shape over a period of a few weeks and it was then promptly delivered to feed the intellectual and political appetite of a certain local establishment and to ensure fame and power for the *Missione*. The fieldwork results lived up to the highest expectations (Cagiano 1964; Moscati 1964, 15). The artefacts, and structural features retrieved during the first weeks of exploratory trenching appeared to be of such great archaeological and historical value that they helped massively in achieving fast-rewarding results.

The efficiency shown in the fieldwork was coupled with an equally effective interpretative process and dissemination strategy. While the on-site activities were still proceeding, it was possible for the *Missione* to delivery an express interpretation of the site that is still, for the most part, considered valid. As early as November 8th 1963, the Times of Malta reported the sensational discovery of the first potsherd bearing the Greek word Hera that 'may prove to be one of the greatest discoveries ever made in Malta'. This tiny fragment from a sacrificial dump was the first piece of evidence used to construct an interpretation of the Tas-Silġ site. For the first time the *Missione* could attribute the remains of the Punic temple to the cult of Hera-Juno. This finding was pivotal in associating the Tas-Silġ temple with the famous sanctuary of Juno desecrated by the Roman Governor, *Verres* as denounced by Cicero (4.2.1; Rossignani 2009b) Such identification allowed the *Missione* to build the core of its powerful interpretation (Cagiano 1964b, 111-2; 1966a, 130-1). It ultimately strengthened its position as undisputed

leader of the historical archaeological debate in Malta. In archaeological terms this interpretation projected the site into the pan-Mediterranean dimension of the great sanctuaries dedicated to Hera/Juno. It also underpinned the construct of the site's unceasing sacred nature over a period that stretched from prehistory to Medieval times (Cagiano 1964b, 111-2; Ciasca 1964b, 149-153).

In the aftermath of the first five weeks of activities these sensational outcomes could be officially delivered to the Maltese and Italian public. At the closing conference held at the Catholic Institute in Floriana, Cagiano confidently claimed that within the Tas-Silġ site lays the famous sanctuary that had been dedicated to the Phoenician Astarte and later to Hera-Juno. He also touched on the occupation of the site from prehistoric to Byzantine times (Figure 6-3) (Times of Malta, 26 November 1963, 5). In reporting the news to the Italian public Cagiano emphatically remembered how:

> A tiny potsherd only slightly wider than ten cm allowed us to identify the sanctuary of Juno in Malta, widely renowned in Antiquity. After only a few days of excavations this chance find has entirely recompensed all our efforts and commitment (dedication). (*Un piccolo frammento di piatto, un coccetto di poco piu' di dieci centimetri di larghezza, ci ha permesso di individuare un santuario molto rinomato nella antichitá, quello di Giunone a Malta. Erano solo pochi giorni che scavavamo, quando la sorte ci ha ricompensato con larghezza delle nostre fatiche e del nostro impegno*) (L'Osservatore Romano, 6 Dicembre 1963, 5).

Important Discoveries by Archaeological Mission

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Three important stratifications were found at Tas-Silg. ese remains belong to the Byzantium, Punic and Prehistoric riods. These remains were described in a lecture by Profes- Azevedo, held under the auspices of the *Circolo Dante ghieri* at the Catholic Institute, Floriana, recently.

The Italian Archaeological ssion in Malta conclud- the first phase of excava- ns during the last month i the first half of this nth.

Work was concentrated in areas — at Tas-Silg near rsaxlokk and at San Pawl gnqi between Salini and St l's Bay.

Juno's Sanctuary

addition to the three rtifications, an inscription Greek was found at Tas- which indicates that the ains belong to a sanc- y dedicated to the god- Juno.

ther inscriptions in Punic lcated to the goddess rte and Tanit confirms nature and identifica- of the sanctuary at Silg.

ne imposing foundations onstrate the grandness o. edifice which graced Tas- hundreds of years ago. It is hoped that the rest ne foundations will be un- red in the next phase of ampaign.

at least the Fourth Century A.D. In between this period of about five centuries there were various phases of reconstruction.

A small section of the building belongs to the Early Christian phase. Although the Mission has not yet established the use of this part of the villa, it suggests however the existence of the Pauline Tradition in the locality at least from the Fourth Century onward.

The Early Christian cult is particularly suggested by two drawings on a stone. One of these represents a fish which is an old well-known Christ an symbol; the other depicts a Greek-type cross. The next phase of excavations in this locality may prove to be of vital interest as well, pointed out Professor Azevedo.

Combined Effort

Excavations by the Archaeological Mission were organized by the Institute of Studies of the Near Orient of Rome University under the auspices of the Italian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Education, and in cooperation with Assistant Archaeologists.

Captain C. Zammit, Director of the National Museum, was the Malta Government representative attached to the Mission.

Authoritative Maltese scholars have also given their valuable collaboration to the Mission, concluded Professor Azevedo.

A section of the audience which heard Professor Azevedo (inset) at the Catholic Institute describe the important excavations carried out at Tas-Silg and San Pawl Milghqi.

LECTURE AT CATHOLIC INSTITUTE

The second of a series of organized by the St. Paul monthly lectures in Maltese

Figure 6-3: Closing conference of the 1963 campaign (after Times of Malta, November 26 1963, 5)

The body of information gained during the first year of investigation at Tas-Silġ was impressive, confirming the unique nature of this site in the context of Maltese archaeology. Based on this fact a triumphant Cagiano claimed 'we have put our hands on the most important Punic centre of the island.' (*Possiamo dire di aver messo le mani sul centro punico piu' importante e significativo dell'isola*) (Cagiano 1964, 19). In the following seven years, as one excavation campaign followed another, the *Missione* refined the identity of the site adding new elements to confirm its millenarian sacred nature and its uniqueness.

The dissemination of the information obtained from these campaigns was extremely well planned and articulated. The series of preliminary reports that updated the development of the research was a powerful communication tool. The Times of Malta dedicated a long

article to the first volume of these reports when it was published in 1964 (Figure 6-4). The article extolled many aspects of the report, from the 'superb thick paper' and abundant illustrations to the scientific contents with which the 'erudite public' would be acquainted. It described the main contributions written by members of the *Missione* and well-known Maltese scholars, praising the graphic section that accounted for almost half of the volume (Times of Malta, 22 October 1964, 8). The political side of this story cannot be forgotten. The reports were yet another tool to be used to further strengthen the political links between Malta and Italy. Aware of the political impact of this strategy, the *Missione* was extremely careful to publish each volume before the next fieldwork season commenced. Once published, the volume was promptly sent out to the Maltese authorities; in 1965 the Minister of Education received enough copies to present the volume as a gift to the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the leaders of the four opposition parties (NAM, ME 35/63:84,89).

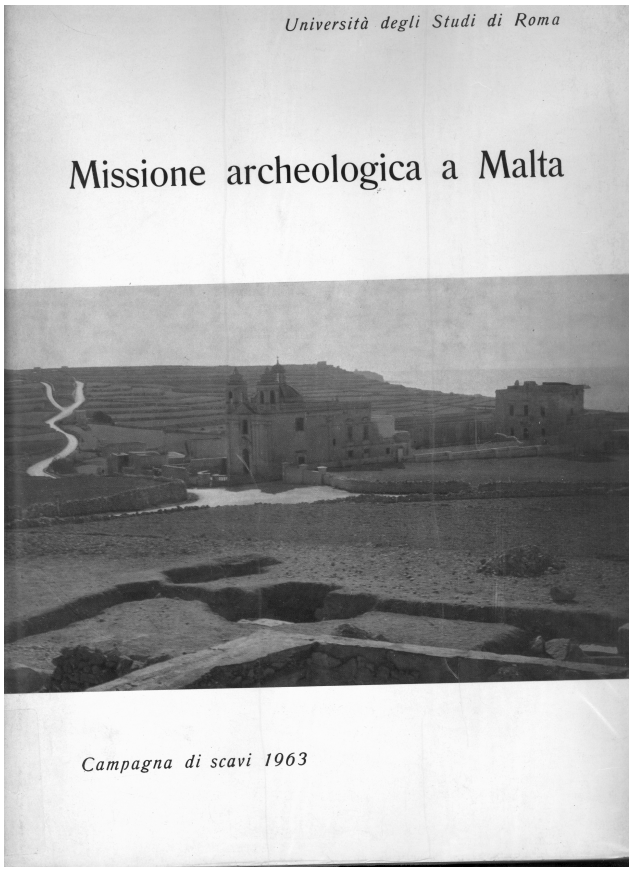

Figure 6-4: First volume of the *Missione* reports published in 1964

6.3.4 Contemporary consequences and perspectives

Even now the grand interpretation set out in the first few years of excavations of the *Missione* encapsulates the essential features of the Tas-Silġ site from a professional standpoint. Tas-Silġ is an extraordinary archaeological entity. It is exceptional on the geographical scale of both the Mediterranean area and of the Maltese archipelago. Its pan-Mediterranean dimension is introduced often by superlative expressions such as 'one of most important', 'one of the most remarkable', 'extremely important' (1B; 1E; 1F). Its importance is based on the fact of being a multi-period site with repeated cult use 'which keeps achieving new significance in different periods and always with a cult focus' (3A) and on sharing this peculiar feature 'with few other archaeological entities in the Mediterranean' (*condivide con poche altre*

realtà dell'area mediterranea) (1A). On a Maltese level this 'extremely important succession of sanctuaries' (1C) is regarded as 'the most remarkable site' (3E) and 'very special if not unique' (1F). This dominant view has been sometimes criticized. According to one Maltese professional, for example, Tas-Silġ is not unique but in the context of Maltese archaeology is indeed typical: 'Tas-Silġ epitomises the archaeology of Malta; crowded, rich and continuous.' (1I). On a broader scale one *Missione* archaeologist argued that the deposit and the history of the site 'doesn't differ much from any other sanctuaries in the Mediterranean.' (*questa è quella di un qualsiasi santuario del Mediterraneo.*) (1D).

With regard to archaeological practice, opinions are mixed. Among Italian practitioners it is acknowledged that the lack of a strict stratigraphic approach affected the quality of data acquisition (1B, 1D, 1H). The employment of a multi-disciplinary team and of a global diachronic approach to the deposit has been recognized to be a very innovative perspective for that time (1H). Some maintain that Tas-Silġ is difficult to understand and to make it understandable to people because of the investigative strategy adopted in the 1960s (1D). One Maltese professional claims that the 1960s research agenda was biased by the idea of a religious continuity, which affected the approach to the deposit and the research interpretative outputs (2A). Same argument on *Missione idée fixe* on religious continuity has been addressed on an academic paper (Bonanno and Frendo 2000, 67 note 2).

Dr Nicholas Vella questions the solidity of the whole archaeological process adopted by the 1960s *Missione*:

> 'If the work undertaken by the *Missione Archeologica Italiana a* Malta is placed in the context of the activities

> carried out by the centre founded by Sabatino Moscati in Rome, then its has to be considered good quality. *[...]* However in the context of the scientific archaeological practice that I know was being adopted elsewhere at that time, I can see a series of lacunae. For instance, sections are essential to understanding an archaeological site and for a complex site like Tas-Silġ they are crucial - yet they only made an appearance in the Missione's last volume. Nevertheless at the time the Centro di Studi Fenicio-Punici directed by Sabatino Moscati was using such method and approach. (*Se uno guarda la Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta nel contesto dei lavori eseguiti dal centro messo su da Sabatino Moscati a Roma, allora il lavoro deve essere giudicato ben fatto ... Ma se giudico quel lavoro nel contesto di un archaeological practice scientifica che io so che si faceva altrove allora vedo che ci sono delle lacune. Ad esempio per capire un sito archeologico è fondamentale avere delle sezioni, che in questo caso appaiono solo nell'ultimo volume della Missione. E soprattutto in un sito complicato come Tas-Silġ le sezioni sono fondamentali. Però questo era all'epoca il metodo e l'approccio usati dal Centro di Studi Fenicio-Punici di Sabatino Moscati*.) (2B).

In other words, Vella argues that the investigations in Tas-Silġ can be considered scientifically sound only in the context of the research criteria laid down by Moscati. Conversely, if the approach adopted at Tas-Silġ is tested against more general criteria outside Moscati's realm it falls far behind the best archaeological practice of its time.

With regard to the dissemination programme, the 1960s investigations are still held up as an example by both Maltese and Italian professionals. The 1960s Missione is praised for communicating its archaeological discoveries to the public through a series of conferences held 'every year or at the beginning of the following campaign at the Catholic Institute in Floriana (ogni anno o all'inizio della campagna successiva si teneva una riunione nell'Istituto Cattolico di Floriana)' (2A). According to an interviewee the *Missione* kept local authorities and newspapers updated on the research achievements.

> It was a concern and also a commitment since the Italian Foreign Affairs Office funded the investigations: funds were provided subject to the dissemination of the results. (*attenzione e anche un obbligo perche' erano ricerche pagate dal Ministero degli Affari Esteri: i soldi vengono erogati con la condizione che i risultati vengano diffusi*) (1D).

Putting them in the context of their times, such 'lavishly produced volumes' *(*2C*)* are still held up as an example. It is claimed that such high-standard publications, issued every year over nine years, was something exceptional and without equal for those times (1A, 1B, 1H, 2A, 2C, 2B, 1D). 'In the 1960s how many other sites were published so extensively?' (1D). It was also noted that this is something that many archaeological projects nowadays are still far from achieving. (2B)

Some however argue that the first *Missione* privileged the efficiency of the beautifully presented, annual publication over the accuracy of the information provided. In particular the scientific viability of such 'thick heavy books slightly propagandistic in tone' (*grossi libroni un po' propagandistici*) (1C) is questioned. It is also said that:

> At the outset Moscati should not have required an annual volume instead every two-three years something more detailed could have been published and at the end of the on-site activities they should have focused on a conclusive study. This is something that we tried to achieve and we failed (*Moscati non doveva esigere che ogni anno uscisse mentre invece magari ogni due, tre delle cose un po' piu' approfondite e alla fine quando si e' giudicato che bastava impegnarsi in uno studio finale. Questo ci si era provato in realtà ma poi è' andato male*) (1C).

6.3.5 The narratives of the preliminary and of the final

Sensational discoveries delivered through an extremely efficient dissemination plan were the core ingredients of the *Missione'*s success in the sixties. Moscati with his political stature and charisma firmly led the Italian expedition to this undisputable success. However a major flaw can be detected in this almost perfect scheme: while the site was excavated at an extremely rapid pace, the equally rapid grand interpretation of the evidence was mostly presented as non-conclusive.

A well-documented debate on some pieces of evidence from San Pawl Milqi shows how the *Missione*'s so-called preliminary conclusions were little more than exploratory hypotheses. Cagiano presented a detailed hypothesis on the Apostle Paul's stay at the Roman villa unearthed at San Pawl Milqi by the *Missione* (Cagiano 1966b). Cagiano and Moscati both stated that the study was meant to be preliminary in its findings. That same year Guarducci demolished this captivating thesis by countering every piece of evidence used by Cagiano (Guarducci 1966, 144-151). In replying to Guarducci's critique Cagiano brought the reader's attention again to the provisional nature of

his thesis (Cagiano 1965-1966; 1966b; 1966c). Guarducci came back to this point, arguing that the wording with the expressions of absolute certainty used by Cagiano was quite out of place in a provisional work (Guarducci 1967, 179).

This is where the *Missione* plan failed. As for the Pauline evidence, the triumphal and propagandistic tone used to deliver the results of the investigations at Tas-Silġ clashed with their alleged provisional nature. The lavish reports annually issued by the *Missione* were also preliminary. In the short term such inconsistency was not a problem as the overall strategy worked well and ensured a steady dissemination process. However, it generated very high, even disproportionate expectations of the final comprehensive publication of the excavations. The circumstances of the 1970s and 1980s (6.4) were such that the issue of the final publication remained open. This weakness has been widely exploited to diminish the scientific contribution of the *Missione*. Publications written by members of the *Missione* after the 1960s have done very little to counterbalance the discourse of the pending final volume. This can be explained by the fact that the post-1960s publication activity has been poor and inconsistent, as someone within the *Missione* has admitted (1H). However, the majority of the Italian professionals do not agree with this position. They generally maintain that the research achievements have been systematically published and disseminated through conferences and workshops. The *Missione* could have delivered more, it has been stated. However, as it often happens, the financial resources available to the research team were insufficient for a larger-scale publication (1B).

The discourse of the *Missione'*s final report maintains considerable grip among Maltese professionals. Therefore, the 1960s reports, although 'only preliminary', are considered crucial tools for

understanding the site. This is not an appreciation of their scientific value as such but rather it implies that they contrast with the lack of data from the site in more recent times (2B). It is argued that the Second *Missione* failed where the first succeeded forty years earlier. Besides the recurrent theme of the final report, reference is generally made to the fact that most of the Italian publications and studies are not accessible in Malta. According to someone close to the Italians: 'they have done a lot of work but you don't even find them in Maltese libraries. I've only found these articles because I'm in contact with friends that are in contact with people who are experts in their own field.' (1I). However the public dissemination of results 'just like any other institution in the real world has been largely restrained and mainly dependent on the various researchers involved.' (1I). This professional cites the example of the Prehistoric unit that, compared with the rest of the *Missione*, has been keener to disseminate the results of its own research among local professionals and amateurs (1I).

The final report issue hangs over the future of the *Missione*. The Italians have a future in Tas-Silġ 'on condition that they publish the final report.' (2C). And vice versa, according to another person, they will be allowed to withdraw from the site as long as they publish the final volume of the excavations: 'you cannot say "enough": you need to give to the public the final report.' (*uno non può dire "basta": bisogna dare al pubblico il final report)* (2B). This ethical imperative for the *Missione* to publish the excavations fits very well in the context of the following written passage that advises on the danger of loosening agreements with foreign archaeological expeditions:

> In the past much vital knowledge has been lost, and indeed much priceless archaeological material … It is, of

> course, necessary to work with reputable archaeological teams from abroad, but clearly their obligations with respect to reports and the record of the excavation must be clearly defined. Without these any excavation is vandalism (De Bono 1999).

It is far too easy to read between the lines a direct reference to the *Missione* and to its ethical responsibilities to a truthful archaeological practice and an accurate dissemination of the research outputs.

The *Missione* itself unanimously came to the conclusion that a comprehensive volume on the *Missione'*s activities in Tas-Silġ is a much-needed cornerstone for establishing any future research plan and for silencing the well-rooted discrediting strategy. The narrative of the final publication has flourished under the combined effects of the grand yet preliminary results delivered by the first *Missione* and the circumstances of the *Missione* project after the 1960s.

6.4 Invisible players

6.4.1 Under the Shadow of Tas-Silġ

In the 1970s a major shift occurred in the Tas-Silġ project, marking the beginning of a long and troubled post-excavations season. The appointment of Ciasca as Director of the *Missione* appears to be a precondition of this shift. She possibly gave a new management direction, promoting a new in-depth approach to the research. Ciasca was a highly regarded scholar of Phoenician-Punic archaeology, who devoted a great deal of her scholarly life to Tas-Silġ, building a personal bond with the site, which survived until her death in 2001. She was on the front-line of the project from the very beginning in 1963. She became deputy-director of the excavations in 1965 and Director of the

Missione in 1968, when Moscati stepped down. When one year later the management of the *Missione* was transferred to the *Centro di Studi per la Civilta' Fenicia e Punica,* a newly established research body of the *CNR* (*Centro Nazionale per le Ricerche*), she took over the directorship of the *Centro* together with the *Missione*. She held this post until 1976 (NAM, ME 35/63:76; Moscati 1966, 15; 1967, 15; MUS 114/63:129-151; Bartolini 2005, 19).

Figure 6-5: Antonia Ciasca in 1963 (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

Figure 6-6: Ciasca with the *Missione* directors: Moscati (left picture); Cagiano (right picture) (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archaeologica Italiana a Malta*)

The 1971 campaign officially marked the transition from the excavation to the post-excavation seasons. In addressing the audience during the traditional closing conference, Cagiano made it clear that the role of the *Missione* in Malta had changed. In his carefully worded speech, he announced the end of excavations at Tas-Silġ in order to put 'to good scientific use the work so far completed' (Times of Malta, 16 November, 1971,16).

Most of the work was carried out a few hundred yards away from the site, in the basement of the Monastery of Our Lady of Tas-Silġ (MUS 22/63I: 32; MUS 22/63I: 78,80,82; MUS 22/63I: 139). It was here that nearly all the material collected from the site had been stored since 1963 and over an eleven-year period the *Missione* had processed a vast number of artefacts. The late Director Rossignani shared some pleasant memories of those times: 'the spaces were beautiful … the material was stored in a series of corridors and huge rooms made available by the Carmelite Fathers.' She further recalls the 'ritual' for paying the rent to

the *Frari* (Ciasca's friendly name for the Fathers) that Ciasca performed annually:

> She used to go to the Convent, pay the rent, have a little chat while drinking a glass of rosolio *(*a liqueur that is very popular in Sicily*)* kindly offered by the Fathers. Then, once back home she would gulp down a couple of glasses of whisky to get rid of the taste of the rosolio that she didn't much like (1A).

Ciasca and a few other Italian colleagues carried out the post-excavation study. 1982 was the only year that a large team was involved (R.G.D. 1983, 65-66). Interestingly enough this occurred just before the *Missione* withdrew. When the *Missione* switched to a less attention-catching research phase in the 1970s, its prominence in the public scene gradually declined. In patent contrast with the 1960s activities, the post-excavation season was marked by a chronic lack of media cover. This was probably due to the fact that the team had been downsized to a few researchers. Moreover, the nature of the work which rarely involved on-site activities or the engagement of a local workforce also contributed to the lack of media interest. What is known is that workers were provided upon request to clean the site in preparation for the recording and digging of limited sampling trenches whenever required by the progress of the interpretative analysis (MUS 114/63: 129-162; Pos. CFP B/2/Mal, prot. 7845). The periodic visits of the Italians deserved occasional mentions in the Museum section of the Working of Government Department reports (R.G.D. 1973, 72; 1982: 62-63; 1983: 65-66). The *Missione* came to Malta on a yearly basis with only two gaps: in 1976 and 1978–1979 (MUS 114/63: 143, 147, 150; MUS 22/63 I). The first interruption was most likely related to the change in *Missione* leadership

when Prof Filippo Cesare Bondì replaced Ciasca as Director of the Centro and of the *Missione* (MUS 114/63: 129-151; Bartolini 2005, 19).

Figure 6-7: Ciasca and Cagiano at work in the basement of the convent (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

In the 1970s, following a routine established in the 1960s, the *Missione'*s annual visits were approved by the Director of Museums and by the Ministry of Education and Culture. Until the 1975 campaign, it seems that it was customary for the Ministry to grant this permission by default (MUS 114/63; MUS 22/63 I). In 1977 it is possible to detect a change: the Museum Director, in informing the then Minister of Labour, Welfare and Culture of the arrival of the *Missione* for a new research campaign, made reference to a conversation on the future of the *Missione*'s research and on the possibility of opening the sites of Tas-

Silġ and San Pawl Milqi to the public (MUS 22/63 I: 200, 202). There were no further references to plans to make those sites accessible until 1993.

6.4.2 Epilogue

In the original plan, the most important outcome of the post-excavation phase was the publication of a detailed account of the excavations and the research work conducted to test the validity of the preliminary conclusions reached in the 1960s against the new findings derived from a meticulous analysis of the data. The research was abruptly halted while the material was still under study so this planned outcome was not achieved. The activities in Malta stopped in 1983 and the *Missione* as a research entity was dissolved. This was a direct consequence of changes that had taken place at the headquarters in Rome: the *Missione* was now governed by the Institute for Phoenician and Punic Civilizations led by Prof Enrico Acquaro. The new leadership imposed a general reduction of Institute activities in the Mediterranean and the *Missione* in Malta was one of the victims of this policy (Bartolini 2005, 19-20; MUS 22/63I, 199-201)

In 1982, Bondi, the *Missione* Director at the time, informed the Museum that due to the upgrade of the *Missione*'s parent body and related administrative delays the usual campaign was cancelled (Pos. CFP B/2 Mal. Prot. 8489). After the above letter, the information available is scanty and contradictory: the archival material seems to indicate that the 1981 visit was the last official campaign followed in 1983 by the formal interruption of the activities. The official publication of the Government Departments for 1982, however, reports a further period of study by several members of the *Missione* in the first two weeks of December 1982 (R.G.D. 1983, 65). That said, in 1983 the

Missione ceased to exist. We do not have the document that officially states this, even if a letter sent by the then Curator of the National Museum of Archaeology, Dr. Tancred Gouder (Gouder), to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Culture on January 1984 provides confirmation: 'The Italian Archaeological Mission from the University of Rome has terminated the excavations … and has now officially passed over to us the responsibility for the storage of the excavated material from the three sites' (MUS 114/63: 159).

The late Director of the *Missione*, Rossignani, recalls how badly Ciasca reacted to the Institute's decision to abandon Malta. Apparently, she was not consulted over the issue. Although she had stepped down from the directorship years before, she was certainly the most experienced and knowledgeable member of the *Missione* (1A).

6.4.3 The storing issue

The sudden decision taken by the *Missione*'s parent body in 1983 to abandon Tas-Silġ to its own destiny had a major impact on the issue of storing the material that had been excavated. It is hardly surprising that Maltese authorities had no choice but to accept the circumstance of being left alone to figure out a feasible solution to this problem. The overwhelming question for Malta was, thus, what to do with the 'enormous quantity of material' collected by the *Missione* since 1963. The dilemma then faced by the Museum was whether to renew the lease with the Carmelite Fathers or to transfer the material elsewhere. This latter option posed the further issue of a possible alternative location, as the Museum could not possibly store over 40,000 boxes of artefacts and architectural features. Even assuming that they could store all these boxes, the cost of removing them from the Monastery would have reached 'staggering figures', estimated at a minimum of £M 2,000.

Gouder arranged to renew the lease agreement with the Convent and to supply the Punic and Roman collections at the Museum with the most 'exhibitable' items. In his mind this would have allowed enough time to gradually move all the material stored at Tas-Silġ Monastery to a suitable and safe place (MUS 114/63: 159). However this plan did not work because in June 1984 the monastic community asked to terminate the rental agreement, as the premises occupied by the archaeological material were required for religious use. A huge number of artefacts had to be moved as soon as possible and adequately storing and protecting them was a complex task. The material was still stored within the monastery in March 1985 when the Carmelites sent a reminder to the Museum to pay the rent. According to the residents of the Convent such payment was still pending even if reference to a payment voucher passed to the Treasury in March 1985 suggests the opposite (MUS 114/63: 160-162).

What happened next is, unfortunately, not supported by any written documentation. There was no communication between the Maltese authorities and what was left of the *Missione* and more broadly there is a general lack of data on the sites excavated by the *Missione*. As a matter of fact, on an institutional level the *Missione* no longer existed and the management of the *Missione*'s sites had officially passed to Malta. The few pieces of evidence available for these crucial years are reported below. Particularly telling are some personal recollections. Father Eusebio Debono, at that time Superior at the Monastery of Our Lady of Tas-Silġ said on one occasion that he first tried to contact Ciasca on the moving issue. Most likely this happened before September 1983 when the Monastery was informed by the Institute that the research had been concluded and, therefore future rental payments 'devolved upon the Malta Government.' (MUS 114/63: 160). Not getting any answer from

Italy he then contacted the Museum and then the Ministry of Education. He recalls that basement 'was a magnificent view: everything was so well organized in boxes, tidily piled and labelled. Ciasca knew her job. Perfect … It was a shame to move them in this way' (5A). It is even alleged that, to radically solve the problem of the material, someone from the Government suggested digging a deep hole in the Monastery garden and throwing the excavation materials there (5A).

Despite all the difficulties the material was eventually moved between April and November 1985 and, according to Debono, by the end of 1985 the new rooms of the convent were inaugurated. The excavation material was moved out of the Monastery and jumbled in a couple of rooms within the Cottonera lines at Cospicua, allocated to the Labour Department. This is the only undisputable piece of information available. According to Debono, thanks to the mediation of the Minister of Education, the then Minister of Labour and Sport sent six men and the necessary means to relocate the material in a portion of the Cottonera. After three months of strenuous work they finished the removal. The material was placed randomly in the rooms at Cottonera and apparently without any constant supervision by the Museum.

I also learned that during the removal some of the material was lost. This shameful circumstance is unknown to most people and its implications ignored by those who are aware of it. Key sources confirmed that all the material placed on the shelves inside one of the basement rooms that were under study at the time of relocation, mysteriously disappeared. Among the items that disappeared there were all the little boxes containing metal objects that the *Missione* had not yet handed over to the Museum, a Phoenician vase that Ciasca had reconstructed from minimal fragments, and a beautiful amphora with an inscription in low relief from San Pawl Milqi. In the 1990s the same fate

befell a splendid fragment of ivory carving with a palmette and with half a column with an Aeolic capital (Moscati 1966b). However the circumstances of their disappearance are different. This magnificent artefact had been kept in the Museum's safe since the 1960s. It is alleged that it went missing while being temporary out of the safe for studying purpose. The *Missione* only knew of its disappearance when it was reported missing by Bonanno (2005, 50).

6.4.4 The *Missione*'s decline in context

Circumstances in the 1970s and 1980s were significantly different from those prevailing in the previous research seasons, reflecting the changed political context. The *Missione*'s activities chronologically coincided with the first MLP Government (1971-1987) since independence (6.2.2). Broadly speaking the relationship between Malta and Italy was less stable than it had been under the Nationalists. Furthermore management of Malta's cultural heritage was not a priority for the Labour Government and the development of archaeology as a scholarly subject was badly hindered by the University reform enforced at the end of the 1970s. Therefore, at a first glance, it would be tempting to look for a direct influence of these policies on the fate of the *Missione*'s project. As detailed above (6.4.1), however, the reasons for the end of the excavation season before and the end of research in Malta as a whole have to be found primarily within the *Missione* itself and its parent institutions.

Since 1971, consistently with its agenda, the Maltese establishment had shown a general lack of interest toward the *Missione*'s activities. This is in patent opposition to the welcoming and supportive attitude of the previous Nationalist government. However, it would be misleading to infer that this indifference translated into any sort of

restriction to the annual study period in Malta of members of the *Missione* at least for the first decade or so. The archival material (MUS 114/63) clearly shows that permission was readily granted to the *Missione* by the Ministry of Education and Culture as recommended by the Director of Museums. It is also true that in contrast to a possible disinterest of its Ministry, the Museums Department had never withdrawn its support for the Italian project, standing up for the *Missione* under the most difficult circumstances. It would seem therefore that the new government policy did not directly interfere with the development of the *Missione*'s project. However, the general lack of attention for the cultural heritage sector inevitably had an impact on the Museum's capability to properly manage the Tas-Silġ business when hard times came. In particular, the Museum did not obtain any political support when negotiating the terms of the *Missione* withdrawal and when seeking a feasible solution for storing the excavated material.

In the mid 1980s when Tas-Silġ matters were at their worst under the combined effect of the end of the *Missione* and the storing issue, things started to improve for Maltese archaeology. In 1987 archaeology was reinstated as an academic subject in the Department of Classics and a year later it became the principal subject taught at undergraduate level (Bonnano 1996, 6). At the beginning of the 1990s, the University of Malta produced its first graduates in Archaeology: Nathaniel Cutajar (Vice-Superintendent of Cultural Heritage), and Dr. Reuben Grima (Lecturer in Built Heritage at the University of Malta) were the first ever Maltese students to get a bachelor's degree with Archaeology as their major.

After years of stagnation the archaeological debate in Malta began to flourish. In 1985 Bonanno of the University of Malta organized an International Conference on the theme *Archaeology and Fertility Cult*

in the Ancient Mediterranean. This occasion not only provided a fruitful opportunity for Malta to return to the arena of international scientific debate on the ancient Mediterranean, but it also offered the first chance to discuss the prospect of fresh archaeological projects. The idea of an Anglo-Maltese project at Xagħra Circle in Gozo took shape during the conference. This project was initiated by the Director of the Museums Department Gouder and by Prof. Colin Renfrew from Cambridge. The Cambridge Gozo Project was jointly established by the Universities of Cambridge and Malta under the superintendence of the Museums Department. York and Bristol Universities joined the team at a later stage. The excavations carried out between 1987 and 1994 extensively investigated the vast funerary complex of Xagħra Circle in Gozo, providing new interpretative keys to understand an important chapter of the islands prehistory. The entire field and study archives of the project were submitted to HM in 2006 and few years later the research team published a comprehensive final report of the investigations (Zerafa 1987, 73-5, 1988, 79-83, 1989, 81-90; Renfrew 2009, xxii; Malone *et al.* 2009, xxiii).

Over the years this research saw academics, young professionals, students and volunteers working side by side (Cristina 2009, xxi). It was in the words of the field directors Malone, Stoddart and Trump a truly 'collaborative enterprise that engaged the imagination and skills of an entirely new generation of young archaeological scholars, together with established scholars, inside and outside Malta' (Malone *et al.* 2009, 6). In prizing the cooperative spirit of the Gozo project, Gouder stressed its importance in training a new generation of Maltese archaeologists. In his own words 'all of this augurs well for the future of Maltese archaeology with the assurance that this important

aspect of Malta's heritage rests on the shoulders of competent and soundly trained scholars' (Gouder 1996, 16-18).

Under Gouder's directorship the national archaeological heritage as a whole became a precious resource to be managed and protected. As a professionally trained archaeologist and post-graduate scholar himself, he deeply valued high professionalism in cultural heritage management. This meant ensuring that Museum Curators were rounded archaeologists, appropriately trained not only in formal academic terms but also through field experiences (Pace 2002). This is the reason why he particularly valued international projects where the new generation of Maltese archaeologists could work shoulder to shoulder with first class scholars and use the skills thus acquired to manage their local heritage.

6.4.5 Gouder and Ciasca

Guided by same principles Gouder strived to rescue the Tas-Silġ project. Gouder and Ciasca were linked by a long friendship and by mutual professional respect: their relationship was crucial to the resuscitation of the *Missione* in the 1990s. As beautifully put by a Maltese professional:

> In those early days effectively Malta was represented by one person, the Director of Museums, who happened to be a former student of Antonia Ciasca, who happened to be a specialist in that period, happened to be an archaeologist and happened to be the Director of the Museum; so you had a very limpid relationship which was beautiful. (3A).

However this solid relationship was seriously put at risk by the 1980s circumstances. The *Missione* no longer existed when Ciasca at some point in the 1980s planned to return to her studies in Malta. The

circumstances of her return are not completely clear. Key *Missione* figures inform that she was completely unaware that the excavated materials had been moved in the mid-1980s so she went to the Museum Department to greet her friend Gouder, and to collect the keys of the Monastery warehouse; she then took a taxi to Tas-Silġ and once there discovered what had happened. Two versions of how exactly Ciasca made this discovery exist. According to one source, she actually entered the convent's basement to find no trace of the archaeological material; according to another source, she did not get access as the locks had been changed at the time of the refurbishment. This discrepancy does not change the heart of the matter. The Fathers explained to her what had happened while she had been away from Malta. Gouder provided further explanations and took Ciasca to the new warehouse. Rossignani recalls that this experience was a great shock for Ciasca, so disturbing that she never fully shared it with anybody, leaving many aspects of the story in shadow. What is certain is that the spectacle offered to her upon opening the heavy door of the Cottonera store rooms was a further shock. The boxes were thrown one on top of another and randomly piled up in one room. Parts of the wooden boxes were broken and were knocked over, not to mention potsherds, dropped from the boxes, all over the place.

The circumstances of the moving left a profound mark on Ciasca. This is what one key figure of the *Missione* suggests:

> Rossignani has always maintained that Malta was for Antonia like the lover you don't want to leave: he betrays you and you still love him … Antonia got burned by the treason of the Maltese and of her friend, real friend Gouder on the material issue. (*La Rossignani ha sempre sostenuto che per Antonia Malta era come l'amante che*

> *non vuoi lasciare che ti tradisce ma che tu continui ad amare ... Antonia era rimasta bruciata dal tradimento dei maltesi e del suo amico, amico-amico Gouder per la storia dei materiali*) (1D).

It is said that those circumstances spoiled her trusting relationship with Gouder and changed her attitude toward Malta. The responsibility for this lies, above all, with the *Missione* that had abandoned its research, and burdening the Museum Department with all the consequences of this decision. As suggested the broader political context possibly exacerbated an already unmanageable situation. It is therefore likely that Gouder was as much a victim of the ‘ storage crisis’ as was Ciasca.

Gouder wanted to give a further chance to Tas-Silġ after the regrettable events of the mid-1980s, which he possibly felt co-responsible for. Sharing the view of a key Superintendence figure, at that time the great merit of both Ciasca and Gouder was to strongly believe in the archaeological significance of this research. They were committed to rescuing the material from Tas-Silġ (as well as from San Pawl Milqi) and they managed to do this keeping the financial expenditure to a minimum (4E).

In the wake of the 1990s, Ciasca set up the new warehouse and mostly funded her stays from her personal savings. As part of their training at the Museum two university students, Nathaniel Cutajar and Reuben Grima, were sent by Gouder to help Ciasca with this task. The team gradually increased. By 1991 Prof. Maria Giulia Amadasi (an epigraphist) from Rome was already involved. On the Maltese side, the National Museum of Archaeology made Cutajar and Grima, then Assistant Curators, available together with a couple of other employees including Mario Coleiro, now Executive of Exhibitions & Maintenance

at Heritage Malta, and Michael Spiteri, currently Executive at the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage. The time spent side by side with the Italian scholar was for all of them professionally invaluable and personally pleasant (3A, 3D, 4A). Ciasca is still remembered as an extraordinary person, knowledgeable and persuasive in her reasoning. She possessed the rare gift of sharing her expertise without being patronizing and did not take for granted the help provided in those critical times by the Museum Department. For this she had always been grateful to Gouder and his young colleagues (1D).

6.5 The burdensome legacy

6.5.1 Continuity and breaks

'Salvage'

The personal commitment of Ciasca and Gouder underpinned the institutional rebirth of the *Missione*. The years 1995-1996 marked a real turning point in the development of the research. In 1995, after a short trip to Malta by members of the late *Missione*, Ciasca submitted to the Museums Department a plan for a long-term research project by a new research entity born from the ashes of the old *Missione* (MUS 22/63 II: 275; 74/89; 114/63: 162). In 1996 the second *Missione* was back on the site to set up the excavation plan. Proper on-site investigations started one year later (4.2.3)

The discourse of continuity justified the return of the *Missione* and its claims on the site of Tas-Silġ. The archaeological programme inaugurated in the 1990s found its core validity in the historical connection with the investigations started in 1963. The Museums Director in approving the first on-site campaign claimed that the *Missione* 'stays in charge', implying that the link between the site and

the Italian expedition was never interrupted. He presented the new research as a natural follow-up of the 1960s investigations (MUS 114/63: 163, 164, 167).

In 1998 the Maltese Minister of Education in celebrating the news of the recently funded project for the conservation and display of Tas-Silġ claimed: 'with 35 years of uninterrupted work in Malta to its credit, the Missione is fast establishing itself as the single most creative and productive external influence on the development of local archaeological practice' (MUS 114/63: 171). The narrative of the uninterrupted connection with the past worked particularly well and has been used ever since to validate the Italian archaeological primacy at Tas-Silġ. (MUS 114/63: 167, 168).

The idea of an inter-generational archaeological tradition set by the Italians at Tas-Silġ informs the views of many professionals. According to one: 'it's part of the history of the site and one expects the Missione to work there.' (3-1). Another praises the *Missione* contribution as

> Intergenerational, world-class, impeccable; it has transformed our understanding in particular of the Phoenician and early Roman periods, increasingly now shedding important light on prehistoric periods. So that is a monumental contribution and at international level in terms of the quality of the works done it's among the best. We have the privilege to have hosted this mission as a country (3A).

According to the same source, the Missione 'encapsulates such a body of experience and an evolving research agenda which is developed between

the 2 chapters from season to season … It's such an immense body of resources: vital!' (3A).

Someone else pointed out the danger of disregarding such a body of knowledge and resources: 'it doesn't make sense if a group of people starts working on a site and then they leave and then someone else starts working on it - they have to start from scratch. The experience made has to be continued.' (3-1).

Within the *Missione* this link with the past, driven by a genuine concern for what the first *Missione* had left incomplete, underpinned the new research project. One *Missione* member recalls that when the *Missione* officially left Malta, Ciasca felt 'a deep sense of responsibility for it and this bond alive.' (*Antonia ha sempre avuto una forma di responsabilità nei confronti di Malta, questo legame da tenere vivo*) (1D). This commitment underpinned the birth of the new *Missione* and has distinguished its research and conservation effort ever since: 'the Italians have constantly faced the fact of having never finished what they started.' (*gli Italiani hanno dovuto fronteggiare il fatto di non aver mai terminato quello che hanno cominciato*) (1D).

According to the same source, however, this did not mean that the Italians were responsible for the state of physical and scientific abandonment endured by the site before the 1990s:

> Maltese often make others doing their own stuff and when the others don't do, they shift the blame. The sites had been excavated in the 1960s, then Italians left and the sites were Maltese. In those 40 years it's true that the Italians gave up with the research in Malta (with the exception of Antonia) but it's equally true that none in Malta has filled this gap; there's a University in Malta. What has been

> done on those sites during the 1970s and 1980s from a scientific point of view? Absolutely nothing! Then if they were really interested there was the space. (*I Maltesi tendono molto a far fare agli altri e quando gli altri non fanno tendono a scaricare il barile. I siti sono stati scavati negli anni 60 dopodichè gli Italiani se ne sono andati e i siti erano maltesi. Un'altra cosa fondamentale da dire e' che in questi 40 anni e' vero che gli italiani hanno smesso di occuparsi di Malta (tranne Antonia) ma e' anche vero che nessuno a Malta ha riempito questo vuoto: esiste a Malta un'università, un professore che ha preso in considerazione dei problemi enormi e fondamentali dell'archeologia maltese durante gli anni 70 e poi basta. Cosa e' stato fatto su quei siti negli anni 70 e 80 dal punto di vista scientifico? Assolutamente niente! Quindi se gli interessava proprio lo spazio c'era*.) (1D).

Although it can be agreed that some in Malta are prone at blaming third parties and that this skill has been used in dealing with the Tas-Silġ case, particularly on conservation issues, the evidence from this study shows that on a scientific level the *Missione* was certainly responsible for abandoning the Tas-Silġ project. The way the *Missione* left in the 1980s suggested that its return had to be marked by a plan for the conservation and accessibility of the site (6.4.2; 6.4.3) This signified a new and wider commitment for the Italians: they had to assume responsibility for something that went beyond their research activities. As one of the people interviewed acknowledged, it was again a matter of 'moral responsibility' (1E) for the newly established entity to ensure the conservation of the ruins.

The Italian practitioners unanimously acknowledge that conservation of the site was for the most part neglected in the 1960s and that it was not part of the project's agenda. A Maltese interviewee explained why conservation was 'a less happy story' when compared with the 1960s research activities. He argued that the archaeological team did not perceive this conservation to be their responsibility and the host country at the outset made set no conditions regarding site conservation either: 'it was not expressed as a concern and did not appear in any of the discussions and agreements early on.' This is not surprising given the experience of a more recent project of comparable scale (Xagħra Circle). There was not 'much discussion about the future conservation and presentation challenge; it was only as the site begun to grow around us after several years of excavations that that discussion begun and it's still [continuing] now.' (3A).

The same source maintains that the return of the *Missione* in the 1990s marked a completely different attitude towards conservation:

> It was increasingly becoming a concern and a priority for the Mission and the point was raised many times; and the numbers of backfilling interventions often involving geo-textile sheets were actually effective and more recently this has become a regular routine. I think the last week of every campaign is dedicated to backfilling. [This] is what one can reasonably expect from an excavating mission' whereas 'the responsibility for the long-term management and presentation of the site has to be shouldered primarily by the host country. I do not think [it] is reasonable if this is not in the agreements from the start to burden an archaeological mission with the conservation and

> management of the site unless they are volunteering resources to do that. They are quite distinctive steps so nobody can blame the *Missione* in that respect. (3A).

By the same token an Italian respondent believed that the *Missione* should not embark on a full-scale conservation project, as it was not 'equipped' to tackle this kind of issue:

> It is not just a matter of research objectives as conservation issues require the implementation of specific strategies that usually archaeologists hardly manage to activate; this is particularly true when the investigations are carried out in a foreign country. They are not among the researcher duties. I'm not saying that to justify a non-commitment to conservation but it is a field that presents difficulties unmanageable by archaeological researchers. (*Non è soltanto un problema di obbiettivi e che i problemi della conservazione soprattutto quando si opera in contesti che sono collocati in un altro paese comportano la messa in atto di strategie che normalmente il ricercatore difficilmente può attivare. Non rientrano nei compiti del ricercatore ma non dico questo per giustificare un non impegno in questo senso ma proprio perchè presenta delle difficoltà in un settore che non è gestibile da parte di chi fa ricerca*) (1B).

Although not comprehensive and long-term, the conservation commitment of the second *Missione* has been considered a success. According to a Maltese professional it helped 'the preservation of the structures on a short term basis*'* (1I).

Not everyone in Malta praises the *Missione*'s conservation effort. HM shares responsibility for site conservation and it has attacked the *Missione* for its 'very superficial covering of parts of the sensitive areas … not monitored' (3C) and its 'diminishing concern' (3C). Another staff member presents the issue in this simplistic yet telling fashion: 'it is selfish to excavate and not conserve and protect the site … they excavate, they keep the stuff for themselves, they don't share the information, then the conservation responsibility is ours. It is not fair.' (3-1).

Very different is the approach of an Italian researcher that on the one side acknowledges the huge threats to the monument in terms of degradation and on the other side claims with confidence that:

> I wish we can do more in terms of conservation but I believe this is definitely not our responsibility. When it had the chance, I believe, the Missione made every possible effort to achieve it. (*Sinceramente a me piacerebbe poter fare di piu' in termini di conservazione ma credo che non rientri nei nostri compiti assolutamente. Quando ci fu l'occasione credo che la Missione si sia spesa quanto piu ha potuto per farla*) (1E).

The theme of the physical preservation of the site brings up the critical issue of roles and responsibilities on the site. In particular, the question of who should be accountable for the conservation and maintenance operations on the site is a current point of contention between the *Missione* and HM. This it will be discussed in detail in section (7.4).

A new archaeological creed

Resuming the research at Tas-Silġ proved to be a major research challenge. Elements precious for the analysis were irremediably lost due to the way the data had originally been collected, the un-planned and hectic removal of the material from the Monastery and the lack of adequate protective measures on site. An interviewee felt it was also the nature of the deposit itself together with past spoliations that made the current research challenging:

> It is a pluri-stratified site and as such its interpretation is difficult. The modes of occupation across the centuries with conservation and reuse of features somehow related to the sacred nature of the place make the interpretation process even more complex. Furthermore its millenarian history, in some areas, is compressed in a stratigraphy of few centimetres. As a consequence a surgical attention is needed to define (stratigraphic) relationships and correlations and sequences of phases. Widespread spoliations across the centuries create a further obstacle to the interpretation. (*È un sito pluristratificato e come tale presenta notevoli difficoltà interpretetative, accresciute dalle peculiari modalità di frequentazione che nei secoli hanno determinato la conservazione e il riuso delle strutture più strettamente legate alla sacralità del sito. I più di tre millenni di storia del luogo sacro sono, in alcuni punti, compressi in una stratigrafia di esiguo spessore, e ciò rende delicato lo stabilire connessioni e rapporti e definire planimetrie di fase. Ulteriori difficoltà sono*

generate dagli estesi episodi di spoliazione cui il sito è stato sottoposto, fino ad epoca moderna) (1A).

In returning to Tas-Silġ, the new *Missione* accepted the complex scientific challenge of re-processing the vast amount of data collected in the sixties in the light of state of art archaeological approaches. Therefore the new programme of on-site interventions was intended to integrate the lacunae of the first dataset as well as to broaden and revise the interpretations based on it. Furthermore this time achieving a better understanding of the site over the millennia was also instrumental to the public enjoyment of the monument (MUS 114/63: 162).

The on-site activities link back to the 1960s investigations. As one stated, the current research project is directly connected with the 1960s and aims at better defining and articulating the occupational sequence set out in those years. It is argued, however, that in linking to past investigations, the second phase has focused too much on the early and monumental features of the site, neglecting more recent phases and transformations, which are marginal in terms of structural impact. It has also been noted that the study of artefacts and the territorial analysis have been largely disregarded as they were in the 1960s. Contrary to this view another praises the outstanding methodological attention dedicated to revising previous research outcomes and concurrently to investigating first-hand the deposit.

A new methodological approach to the whole archaeological process and the implementation of targeted strategies set to address specific research issues are generally recognised as the most remarkable achievements of the new *Missione*. By adopting a strict stratigraphic approach and distancing itself from the 1960s *modus operandi*, the

Missione professed a new methodological creed. This is praised among Maltese professionals. The research at Tas-Silġ is considered 'in line with contemporary best practice across Europe*'* (3A) as it fully complies with the requirements of current scientific investigations. However, some call into question the *Missione*'s research agenda, describing it as 'tentative' (1I), requiring clear definition. In the same vein the *Missione* is blamed for 'excavating simply to discover what is there*'* instead of adopting a comprehensive strategy to establish 'what to do with the site once the excavations finish' (4B). And another one, giving voice to an alarming extremist concern, believes that the *Missione* has no plan whatsoever to end its research: 'it appears that the research at Tas-Silġ will go on forever, even after publication*.'* (1I).

6.5.2 Making Prehistory

The introduction of a specific programme of investigations of the prehistoric deposit is reckoned as a point of strength of the Second *Missione*. It has already been fully detailed how the narrative of the prehistory – History dichotomy has been a key point in the construction of the identity of the Italian research entity and, ultimately, of the site of Tas-Silġ (6.3.1). However, as early as the 1964 the deposit itself challenged this construct when the archaeologists brought to light unmistakable evidence of prehistoric occupations of the hill (4.3.1). Experts soon acknowledged the significance of those first findings, particularly Trump who lectured Evans for omitting them in his work (5.3.4).

True to its disciplinary statement and valuing cooperation with the locals, the *Missione* outsourced the study of the prehistoric evidence to the Archaeological Curator at the Museum, Mallia. By the same token, Ciasca suggested passing over the study of a prehistoric tomb

from San Pawl Milqi to her more knowledgeable Maltese colleagues (NAM, ME 35/63: 94). At the closing conference of the last fieldwork in 1971, a cautious Cagiano suggested a general re-thinking of the research at Tas-Silġ in terms of chronological targets, opening up to the promising chapters on the pre and proto historic occupations of the hill (Times of Malta, 16 November, 1971, 16; Cagiano 1973, 97-98, 100).

Notwithstanding the early acknowledgement of its significance, the prehistoric deposit from Tas-Silġ stayed virtually untouched until 2003. This time the *Missione* equipped itself with a well-organized prehistoric unit, and consequently it became scientifically self-sufficient and no longer needed to outsource aspects of the research. Since then prehistoric occupation of the site became a research priority for the *Missione*, the archaeological value of this new course of investigations is significant. It brought to light a range of evidence on the earlier phases and has offered new interpretative keys to core issues on Maltese prehistory (4.3.1). As a result, Tas-Silġ is now an extremely important data source for Maltese prehistory and one of the most important temple-sites of the archipelago (Recchia 2004-2005; Cazzella and Recchia 2012).

Prehistoric investigations opened up a new and unexpectedly rich chapter in the research at Tas-Silġ overcoming its traditional focus on the historic period. However, these exciting research developments quite paradoxically had a destabilizing effect on the link between the *Missione* and the Tas-Silġ site. This can be detected both internally between the various research units of the *Missione* and, externally, among Maltese CHM bodies. These research developments have *de facto* defeated the original purpose of the Italian expedition and of the second *Missione* that was established in the 1990s to bring to an end the work left unfinished in the 1960s-1970s. Furthermore, the pivotal role

acquired by the prehistoric research necessarily affected power-relationships among the research units involved in the investigations. In the 1990s a series of units from different academic institutions replaced the organic and centrally controlled team of the 1960s. The new arrangement, one interviewee pointed out, lacks cohesion as the units 'work on the same site with different aims, work pace and research interests' (1H). Further, it is argued that this fragmentation prevented the *Missione* from being entirely committed to the site, as each unit tended primarily to promote its own specific academic interests rather than working together in the best interest of the archaeological site as a whole. According to another interviewee: 'they are not interested in the site but only in their research. The site can even disappear' (1D). Amid the general lack of internal cohesion and possibly of a strong leadership, the growing importance of the prehistoric unit becomes an issue in its own right.

With regard to relations with the Maltese authorities, this new research perspective has shown the real limits of the arrangements made for the Italian research. Since 1996, the boundaries of the *Missione* archaeological commitment has been broadly established in terms of stratigraphic surveys and targeted excavations in order to bring to a conclusion the work started in the sixties (MUS 114/63: 164). It is not surprising therefore that the research potential offered by this new investigation has indirectly questioned the validity of the Italian commitment as it is somehow in contrast with the original target of the research. The *Missione* opened a completely new research chapter and in this perspective 'Tas-Silġ is all to be investigated, all to be understood' (1E). From the researchers' point of view this necessarily means making the most of the untouched deposit for the sake of advancing archaeological knowledge. Such a perspective has not met with

unqualified Maltese support. The underlying message is that the Italian research is welcome so long as its objective is to conclude things left unfinished. In addition to that the Maltese found inappropriate that the rare opportunity to excavate an untouched and extremely rich prehistoric sequence has been given to the Italians (4D). This is beside the point that the idea of unconstrained excavations as advocated by *Missione* clashes with the general call for responsible management of the islands' archaeological resources and a more cautious approach to untouched deposits (SCH 21/2003).

Other similar concerns possibly underpin the argument on the intrusiveness of the Italian excavations: 'The intrusiveness of the [*Missione*] excavations might be considered too much by modern standards' (1I). And by another professional: 'The rhythm of the investigations should be slowed down, in particular with regard to the excavation of the Prehistoric deposit' (2A). Someone asks: 'Do we want that piece of heritage called Tas-Silġ, to be exploited further? That is a big issue: do we want to dig everywhere to the bed rock, which is not the policy of Malta now?' (1I).

6.6 Discussion

The above analysis on how the relationship between the *Missione* and the site of Tas-Silġ developed over the time offered a powerful case on the collective process that shapes archaeological facts and highlighted the role of archaeological professionals as privileged spokespersons of material past. This chapter presented the convoluted links that ensured the success of *Missione* in the first place and it also identified main points of weakness in the construction of this success, which became the preconditions for its failure in the 1970s-80s campaigns and underpinned the faulty recovery in the 1990s. Controversies around *Missione* – Tas-

Silġ associations, which will be tackled in detailed in the following chapter find in those weaknesses their origin.

The *Missione* investigations epitomize the complex process that accompanied the shaping of archaeological facts according to the principles on the construction of scientific facts as detailed in 2.2. In line with what was addressed in Chapter 5, the setting up of the *Missione* is the result of a shift in archaeological power-relations that occurred following intense negotiation between some sections of Maltese political and intellectual establishment and certain authoritative representatives of Italian archaeology. However, the setting up of *Missione* would have been a pointless exercise without the following process of recruiting new forces and of deploying new resources in order to ensure the stability of the association between the activities of the *Missione* and Tas-Silġ over the 1960s. As highlighted above, the construction of archaeological facts is a collective, circular process that needs support from outside archaeology. The analysis in this chapter showed how crucial for the success of the *Missione* in Tas-Silġ was the ability to attract and maintain a growing network of interested people and supporters that mediate the archaeological interpretation set by professionals.

Moscati was well aware of the power exerted by a consistent and diversified dissemination strategy. Conferences, temporary displays, articles and presented Reports were all tools of power. This also confirms and geographically supports the thesis of Bernbeck and Pollock (2004) about the European archaeological expeditions in the Middle East. In particular, they expressly argue that expensively produced volumes serve as a means to preserve power in line with the detailed accumulation of knowledge carried out during excavations (Bernbeck and Pollock 2004, 340). This was certainly an asset in *Missione* hands and a crucial one that was not neglected by Moscati and Cagiano. The

extensive and fast-paced investigations of the Tas-Silġ deposit allowed *Missione* to acquire knowledge without equal on the site and on certain historic phases of the archipelago. In this way, *Missione* already started with the great advantage of the knowledge and skill vacuum created by the Survey decision-making. The excavations later widened this asymmetry of power at an exponential rate: the more Italian professionals excavated the site the more they became knowledgeable and the more they became indispensable spokespersons of Maltese material past, shaping in this process its own and Maltese collective identities.

This virtually perfect circular process had however a fundamental weakness in the provisional nature of the excavations results, which it has been noted served the purpose of a fast publication pace. In the discursive tension between incompleteness and completeness in the creation of an archaeological system of knowledge, tentative and provisional expressions are acceptable as long as stable and more definitive facts replace them (Lucas 2012, 251-54). This did not happen to the interpretative outcomes of the 1960s project.

Once excavation activities ceased in the 1970s and a post-excavations phase was interrupted it became impossible, to complete the 'final' publication of the excavations. Failing to translate on paper the conclusion of an archaeological project is one of the worst possible scenarios for a research team (Lucas 2012, 250-251). In particular this deficiency is revelatory of the paradox of construction of knowledge in archaeology (2.3). With the end of hands-on activities on things (site and artefacts alike) the complete publication would have put the final world to the Italian project in Tas-Silġ and would have become principle repository of the knowledge produced around Tas-Silġ. *Missione* made the huge mistake to leave this knowledge cycle open with two orders of

consequences: on the one had it has become an easy target of more or less sound reprimands, and on the other hand this pending issue has fed into the *Missione* restatement in the 1990s and its ethical commitment to complete the incompleteness.

The circumstances of the post-excavations confirm how the power of archaeology is connected to its ability to negotiate its role with entities outside the discipline (2.4). The director of the *Missione* (Ciasca) did not appreciate the importance of this aspect and despite the valuable scientific work carried out in those years, a reduced ability of networking beyond the scientific realm, hindered the strong chain of fruitful achievements that underpinned 1960s works of the *Missione*.

A less connected and then unsettled *Missione* did not have the power to keep at bay voices of dissents as effectively as the 1960s expedition. In 1970s and 1980s controversies on *Missione* archaeological practice and on the pending final reports flourished and the rhetoric of the Italian attack could enjoy a new phase of popularity. However at some point in the 1990s the *Missione* was able to go back to Malta without much fuss because the link between the Italian expedition and the site somehow survived amid all controversies. This is an important point to address in relation to the 1970s and 1980s circumstances: it shows how knowledge production displacement (2.3) in this case becomes crucial to reinstate Missone control over the site in the 1990s. The solid and extended chain of power-relations that in the 1960s connected the Italian team, their making archaeology in Tas-Silġ, the Maltese political and cultural establishment translated in something different, less powerful but still able to mediate archaeological knowledge and preserve archaeological facts. *Missione* knowledge production was bounded to the materiality of the site in the 1960s, shifted to the convent in the 1970s and then to the new warehouse in

Cottonera; this last move occurred outside *Missione*. In this shifting new associations were established which only marginally involved *Missione* and the site. Thanks to this displacement of knowledge and resources the *Missione'*s privileged position in Tas-Silġ was never uprooted, although challenged in many ways.

The new *Missione* has so far tried to establish new strongholds by tackling the controversies that have gained strength in the 1970s-1980s. A comprehensive final publication is close and state of art archaeological practice and a new awareness of conservation and display issues should help to settle controversies. As detailed in Chapter 3 the new research phase has so far managed to reaffirm the core validity of the archaeological facts established in the 1960s and it has also added important evidence to make them stronger. The prehistoric research in particular has attracted significant interest thanks also to an effective dissemination strategy. This new research chapter and its results have reinstated the *Missione* as a powerful interpreter of Maltese past and have offered to it new spaces of power negotiation. The question is to understand whether and until when Malta will allow the *Missione* keep and strengthen this position of power. This specific issue will be addressed in the next chapter.

6.7 Conclusions

The monumental 1960s Tas-Silġ project marked a fortunate convergence between political and cultural discourses where Maltese aspirations and Italian appetite merged. The *Missione* in offering its skills and expertise to the nascent Maltese state strengthened the Italian archaeological domain beyond national boundaries. At the same time, the *Missione* committed itself to the paramount task of providing essential material for the construction of a Maltese national identity. The *Missione* used this

material to produce an archaeological narrative that enhanced Malta's distinctive historic character. The unique feature was that Maltese archaeologists were not then equipped to tackle and this made the Italian involvement necessary.

One main flaw can be traced in this otherwise successful process. The idea of the unfinished and preliminary nature of the project delivered by the *Missione*. It can be argued that with the conclusion of the excavations season in the 1960s the *Missione* became hostage to this concept. This is because since the 1960s all scientific achievement has been assessed against the parameter of the longed-awaited final publication. The difficult circumstances surrounding the entire Tas-Silġ experience after the sixties made it extremely hard to fulfil this task and it became an unattainable goal.

The post-excavation era was a failed attempt to keep the research successfully set up in the sixties alive. This failure can be ascribed to a series of combined factors:

1) At an archaeological level, the nature of the practice involved in processing data had very little appeal when presented to the general public. It is a time-consuming and long process up to the point that even the community of professionals can appreciate the results of a data only after years of studies.

2) The *Missione* neglected the successful dissemination strategy adopted in the past and this caused the educated Maltese, who used to fill the auditorium of the Catholic Institute for the yearly closing conference, to lose interest in the Tas-Silġ site.

3) The research was carried out indoors and for the most part with no involvement of the local workforce. While a few archaeologists were at work in the Monastery, nobody was taking care of the site a few hundred yards away.

Aquaro's removal from the Maltese project from the Institute agenda was possibly barely noticed in Malta. However these combined factors left a sense of emptiness and dissatisfaction that may have been subtly exploited by part of the local political and cultural establishment. At an institutional level the link between Malta and Italy formally ceased for a decade even if the intellectual and material efforts of Ciasca and Gouder were crucial to saving a unique piece of Maltese heritage.

The new *Missione* successfully distanced itself from the past in terms of its archaeological practice, research targets and conservation concerns. However, its relationships with the site and with the host country to some extents echoed an experience that was cast in political and archaeological paradigms of the sixties. It can be argued that the second *Missione* never fully assessed the consequences of this legacy. It seems that in resuming this past it underestimated crucial aspects of the encounter between this past and the present. These peculiar issues will be further investigated in the next chapter. They have little to do with cutting edge methodology and scientific achievement, but instead they involve crucial issues of colonialism, cultural self-determination and ownership. The chronic fragmentation and lack of synergy that pervades the Maltese archaeological universe has further exposed the Italian weaknesses and challenged their position. In this context the *Missione* has often become trapped in mechanisms beyond its control.

Chapter 7 **Challenging Italian Control**

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter introduced some strands of the conundrum facing the *Missione* since the beginning of the new research chapter in the 1990s. The new research frontier opened by the prehistoric excavations in 2003 showed the fragile balance that regulated the Italo-Maltese relationship. It also gave a sense of the complexities surrounding the Italian presence at Tas-Silġ. This chapter investigates further the contemporary dimension of the Italians at Tas-Silġ. In particular, it focuses on main controversies on the modes of the Italian engagement with the site. They have a complementary destabilizing effect on the *Missione* – Tas-Silġ association.

First to be considered is the significance of the *Missione* to the post-colonial debate in Malta. Several conversations with professionals clearly revealed that archaeological projects carried out by foreigners, like that at Tas-Silġ, are not an appropriate response to the archaeological needs of Malta (e.g. 1I, 3A). The chapter then deals with two circumstances that had crucial unsettling impact on the way the *Missione* traditionally related to the site and the host country. Namely: 1) the excavations at Tas-Silġ by the Department of Classics and Archaeology of the University of Malta; 2) the Cultural Heritage Act. At different times and in different ways, those circumstances have brought into question the Italian control over knowledge production in Tas-Silġ.

Over the decades, the Missione shaped much of the identity of the Tas-Silġ site. The more recent role of the University of Malta in this process should not be underestimated, however. It introduced a post-colonial discourse to the site and attempted to offer an alternative to

archaeology by foreigners. The new legislative scenario transformed the direct and familiar relationship between *Missione* and Museum into a complicated power game where organizational, group, and individual stances competed. As a result the site has become a battlefield, or rather as one interviewee effectively put it, a 'no man's land' (4D).

In terms of data sources, this chapter draws on individual and group interviews, which in many cases substantiate each other to support the account. Archival material is largely deployed as well, in particular in the second and third sections. Data from casual conversations is rarely used for this chapter.

7.2 The Italian legacy

7.2.1 The issue of identity

This research analysed how, from the outset, the configuration of the research project as *Missione* 'Italiana' was instrumental to a renewed Italian commitment to the site and the starting of a new campaign (6.5). However this element had crucial consequences, largely underestimated by the *Missione*. There is a significant difference between the Italian expedition in contemporary Malta and in the 1960s. The link between the 1960 *Missione* and the political and cultural Maltese scenario was considered earlier in section 5.3. At that time, *Missione* investigations served the cause of a national political project and the involvement of a foreign team was not a matter of choice as the circumstances laid down in Chapter 4 showed. The circumstances that brought to the second *Missione* could not be different. As outlined in section 5.2.2 and 5.4.4 above, Malta started to claim its independence in terms of archaeological discipline and in this context the second *Missione* with its burdensome legacy appears to be an anomaly and as one interviewee effectively defines it, a 'relict'.

> It is very much an Italian Mission rather than an international project: it has always been so and it will continue to be so. It is cast in this model like so many other operations, archaeological investigations to be conducted by foreign schools. ... in terms of the international dimension there is much more of a continuity with the tradition (3A).

One added a further element of anomaly for *Missione*, claiming that it differed from other Italian expeditions abroad in the light of the fact that: 'almost every expedition is nowadays Italo- whereas this one in Malta is still *Missione Italiana*. In my opinion this stands as an aspect of neo-colonialism that needs to change urgently; ideally the *Missione* itself should promote such change*'* (2A).

Some supported a change in the nomenclature as a mirror of more substantial changes in terms of Italo-Maltese cooperation. In this respect, one interviewee constructively stated 'I do hope that any future research would be connected to the unique relationship between Malta and Italy. Hopefully, the *Missione* will become *Missione Italiana-Maltese*!' (1I). According to another this new Italo-Maltese research body 'should be led by a Maltese archaeologist' (3E), arguing for a sort of natural leadership on something that at its core belongs to Malta.

Many of the Italian researchers strongly advocated the need to redefine the nature of their research entity since 'the Italian team has connoted its activity as '*Missione'*, which is notoriously an organization not so keen on collaborating on equal terms with local institutions.' (*il gruppo di ricerca degli Italiani ha connotato la sua attività come Missione, che è notoriamente un'organizzazione poco aperta a collaborazioni alla pari con le istituzioni locali*) (1H). In essence, it was

claimed that the modes of the Italian presence had to be entirely reconsidered, establishing new forms of partnership with the local authorities. The final publication appeared to be an essential condition for setting out new ways of collaborating (1H, 1A, 1B, 1E). Some professionals acknowledged that the concept of the *Missione* belongs to the past and today is an obsolete answer to the archaeological needs of the young Maltese country. 'I, for one, can't see the sense of the *Missione* nowadays' one of them says (1H). Another practitioner gives a categorical 'there's no future. Tas-Silġ finishes here!' (1D), frustrating any perspective of future collaboration.

One places the *Missione* in Malta in a well-established Italian paradigm of making archaeology:

> At home we used to have foreign expeditions that conducted research without having any connection with the Italians; therefore we learnt to live with it. … when we work abroad there are the Italian schools in Greece, for instance, that do not work in collaboration with the Greeks. Maybe we have this habit of mind, as this is also what happens in Italy. Here the concessionary university carries out its own research and hands in a final report; this occurs with no collaboration agreement with the superintendence … It is a mental approach, so to speak: we take responsibility for our research and we carry on with it. Of course this needs to change in particular in a young country such as Malta. We need to link in a different way to a different frame of mind. They are accustomed to a different approach … an approach of synergy and integration. In my opinion the British

approach is instrumental and not real…I think …. that there is a sense of inferiority of Maltese towards the Britons. And this is the reason why there is a double difficulty since I think that Maltese are not completely persuaded of collaborating with the Italians, as they are aware they are different in that respect. I think that there is a reciprocal difficulty, which needs to be overcome of course. We have great relations, even of tight intellectual exchange, with some of them. (*A casa nostra siamo abituati ad avere missioni straniere che scavano senza avere nessun contatto con gli italiani, quindi siamo abituati; così come quando lavoriamo all'estero: ci sono le scuole italiane in Grecia, ad esempio, che non collaborano con i Greci. ... Forse noi abbiamo quest'abitudine mentale che è anche quello che succede in Italia dove l'università concessionaria scava e consegna un report finale ma non è che collabora con la soprintendenza. ... Quindi come abitudine mentale, non so come dire, approccio noi ci assumiamo le responsabilità della nostra ricerca in quanto italiani e cosi' andiamo avanti. Ora come dicevo all'inizio questa mentalità deve cambiare soprattutto in un paese giovane come Malta. Bisognerebbe quindi rapportarsi in un modo diverso con una mentalità che è diversa. che è quello dell'integrazione. Secondo me è anche funzionale da parte degli inglesi non è una reale….e secondo me c'è un problema di sudditanza mentale dei maltesi verso gli inglesi; per questo dico che la difficoltà è doppia perchè non credo che nemmeno i maltesi siano così convinti di*

> *voler collaborare con gli italiani che sanno di essere diversi in questo senso. Credo che ci sia una reciproca difficoltà che certamente si deve superare. Noi abbiamo invece degli ottimi rapporti anche di profondo scambio intellettuale con alcuni di loro*) (1E).

The content of the above passage is extremely dense. It sets a parallel between two different working approaches in archaeology. On the one hand the Italians have the habit of working independently and this is also what foreign expeditions do on Italian soil. On the other hand the British are more used to setting up joint projects. However, this British openness is calculated to maintain control over Malta, which it is still struggling to overcome its past of subjection to the former ruler. Such a subtle colonial bond together with a different working style makes the idea of an Italo-Maltese project difficult to realize.

7.2.2 Marks of colonial archaeology

The evidence from this study showed that in contemporary Malta the Italian excavation in Tas-Silġ resembled a form of colonialism. This is not surprising in this small nation, which has only recently come to terms with its long colonial past and in which until fairly recent times most of its archaeology was performed by non-Maltese. It is indeed the Italian/foreign control over a fundamental piece of Maltese archaeology that ignites some Maltese spirits. The prehistoric research showed one of the many faces of this conundrum (5.4.2).

'It's a matter of national property' according to one (1I). And archaeology by outsiders, if not properly channelled and regulated, can be classified dangerously as a selfish exploitation of local resources as has been effectively explained:

> One thing that we have to remember is that Malta has been bitten severely by foreign expeditions. I'm not saying the *Missione* per se but there have been so many individuals that have excavated the best of the best archaeological sites of Malta and the Maltese never really get a bit into it. Xagħra was the first failed experiment, completely failed. Just now I was reading in the European Association of Archaeologists where the British are saying that the excavations were carried out by three individuals, all British whereas I'm almost 100% positive that there was Dr Gouder from the Museum and Prof. Bonanno, as Directors, but we are left out. I don't care if there is a problem. If I go to excavate in Italy, if I go to excavate in England you have to collaborate with the locals, you have to… otherwise it's an obscenity because you are stepping foot on my soil. (1I).

According to others, however, the *Missione* has not evolved in terms of team building in the same way British archaeology in Malta did before:

> We can make a parallel with the experiences of the British expeditions in Malta. As a matter of fact, for instance, the excavation at Skorba was contemporary to the 1960s *Missione* excavations. … The report on Skorba reads the "Society of Antiquaries jointly with (or for) the Museum Department" notwithstanding the fact that Trump was at that time a Museum Department employee. … there is a political dimension behind this phrasing: if you use "for the Museum Department" instead of "the Museum Department" it means that is commissioned by British

> experts. It is like a reverse acknowledgement as "the Museum Department thank you". Conversely in Xagħra, it wasn't an easy process, without difficulties but it started as an English - Maltese collaboration, even the name was English-Maltese project. … the evolution was indeed clear (3A).

It is not surprising that the exclusive Italian control at Tas-Silġ triggered anti-colonial sentiments. What is questioned here is not the Italian presence *per se* but the modes of this presence. As seen in section 5.4.1, many acknowledged the vital role of the Italians in shaping this archaeological entity and, more broadly, in contributing to the development of the discipline. '*It's part of the history of the site and one expects the Missione to work there*' (3-1). And further it 'encapsulates such a body of experience and an evolving research agenda which is developed between the 2 [investigation] chapters from season to season … It's such an immense body of resources: vital*!*' And by the same source: 'They are revisiting past excavations and it is a much more responsible archaeology in this respect but there is this problem of putting the pieces together' (3A). Others point to the danger of disregarding such a body of knowledge and resources: 'it doesn't make sense if a group of people starts working on a site and then they leave and then someone else starts working on it - they have to start from scratch. The experience made has to be continued' (3-1).

The issue is precisely how the *Missione* managed this vital body of resources. The Maltese approach to Italian control confirms once again that in Malta the scar of colonialism was still present. It also sends the subtle message that the second *Missione* betrayed the

fundamental principle of cooperation and mutual support that informed the institution of the first Missione.

> 'We no longer go to Zimbabwe and say we are going to excavate for you, just let us be. … Can't be anymore nowadays a Mission that goes to another country and working in this way and if it does it is not the right attitude for today. It's a matter of working in symbiosis with local community … Italy wasn't a colonizer so it is difficult to understand why this is happening (3B).

Many Maltese professionals lamented that no serious effort was made by the Italians to share and transfer to locals the body of knowledge and experience developed over 50 years of research at Tas-Silġ: 'Archaeological discipline in Malta is still in the early stage, we don't have our own tradition in doing scientific excavations so I think for us it would have been a great opportunity to work together and it never happened' (2-1). The Italians failed to provide precious training opportunities: 'they excavated the site but they never gave something to local people. Have they never helped local archaeologists to become experts in different fields?' (2-1). In this light the Italians frustrated the hopes of many young Maltese professionals to be trained making use of *Missione* resources.

To seek an historical explanation to this it is usually argued that the Italian research in the 1990s:

> wasn't planned as an excavation which grew organically … it was made with such limited resources and still nowadays when I ask: "will you come back next year" the answer is "we'll see"; when there's such level of financial insecurity, if you like, It's hard to even make

> commitments, take on responsibilities that you will train students (3A).

Alongside the specific conditions of the *Missione'*s rebirth in the 1990s the same source suggested that the circumstance of the University project created a further obstacle for Maltese participation in the Italian research (7.2).

Taking the discussion to a further level, one finds it hard to understand why the Italians 'entrench themselves at Tas-Silġ … we have such high rate of development that we cannot keep up with our own archaeology. So much has been destroyed, so much has been lost. … Why hasn't the *Missione* shifted to something else?' Warning that by perpetuating such a short-sighted research strategy 'the *Missione* does actually give truth to some comments that the work is only carried out for the sake of making a name and maintaining control' (1I).

Adding together the points just made by Maltese professionals, it emerges that the ghost of exploitation and control of archaeology by outsiders still unsettles Maltese sentiments. The idea that outsider come, abuse the local resources without giving anything back to the host country, is still powerful.

Although the archaeological discipline has made huge progress in Malta, it seems that it has not completely overcome the sense of subjection to outsiders that underpinned its colonial and early post-colonial past. As seen above, it is suggested that the alleged cooperation with the British still closely complies with colonial paradigms. The interviews with Maltese professionals show that the relation with the *Missione* is guided by similar dynamics. One admits: 'Maltese always feel slightly inferior and this sentiment is difficult to overcome' *(*4B).

Another Maltese professional comparing the first *Missione* with the second one claims:

> How many archaeologists were in Malta at that time? So it was good that they came here and they started the excavations at Tas-Silġ but things have changed and it's a matter of … being treated with equal respect. It is not like "we are capable and you are not". … we are professionals as much as they are; there's no difference. Ok they have maybe excavated more than us but still (3-1).

One confidently takes a stand against the alleged professional superiority of the Italians: 'the *Missione* would need Maltese archaeologists. Not the Maltese would need the Italians; it's the other way. They need our expertise because we know much more than the Italians about our sites, I believe' (2-1). A growing awareness in the local archaeological community is certainly beneficial for the development of an independent discipline. It is a powerful sign that the traditional pattern of knowledge-production by outsiders is gradually fading away. However, a vague sense of subjection can be still detected in the way they engage with this debate. It is as if they still need to persuade themselves of the validity of their own arguments.

7.3 The University project

7.3.1 The reverse rhetoric of the attack

Documentary and unwritten sources confirm that the University proposal of an excavation project in Tas-Silġ at first encountered strong opposition and involved compromises and concessions at the highest institutional level before eventually obtaining full approval. The peculiar layout of the site certainly helped to settle the dispute.

As will be detailed in Chapter 8, since 1965 high masonry walls have defined the area of the site. To be more precise a wall bounded the area to the north of the Zejtun-Delimara road, and another wall bounded the area on the opposite side of the road, toward Marsaxlokk valley. Since that time the Tas-Silġ site has been always perceived as the sum of these two clusters: the North area or northern enclosure and the South area or southern enclosure. The fact that the site consisted of two clusters, bounded by walls and separated by the public Zejitun-Delimara road paved the road for an agreement that assigned the South area to the newcomer, which happened to be the locals, and left the North area to the Italians, which traditionally held the control of archaeology in Tas-Silġ.

In 1994 the University of Malta submitted to the Maltese authorities a proposal for an excavation project at Tas-Silġ as part of the Summer School in Archaeology organized jointly with the University's International Office. At the time, Ciasca and a small team from the University of Rome were back in Malta and the prospect of new Italian fieldwork was taking shape (5.4.1). The Minister for Youth and the Arts in a letter addressed to the University International Office confirmed that the University's request was unexpected and inappropriate, implying an Italian right to claim a sort of ownership on excavations in Tas-Silġ. He listed two orders of problems to accept the University request: firstly the site was already part of an EU programme 'On the Phoenician Route' for which the Museum Director Gouder was directly responsible and secondly there was 'the ongoing involvement of Professoressa Ciasca and her team …' and therefore it would not 'be the best of ethics if the request is acceded to'. An overt invitation to 'come up with alternative proposals' closed the letter along with a reminder that any excavations proposal needed first and foremost the approval of the Museums

Department, implying that in the specific circumstance the University of Malta had not fully complied with this legal requirement (MUS 22/63 II: 267).

After a few months this first opposition was somehow overturned and the plan obtained all the necessary authorizations, including full approval by the Minister and the Museums Department Director (MUS 22/63 II: 274). The decision to limit the investigations to the southern enclosure might have helped to reach an agreement. However it is not clear whether the University planned to focus on this area from the outset for ethical reasons as the Director Bonanno claimed (Bonanno 2008, 3) or whether this solution was eventually negotiated between the interested parties in order to settle the initial argument.

A rumour popular within the *Missione* that had also notable supporters in Malta claims that the University gained approval thanks to political pressure exerted on the Museum Department. One Italian archaeologist openly claims that: 'the investigation activities of the University of Malta, as far as I know, had been agreed on a political level' (1A). Another view links the circumstance of the approval to the relationship between Ciasca and Malta 'Antonia couldn't accept the fact that they forcibly obtained a piece of the Italian excavations from the Museum, which was unwilling to do so' (1D). As happened in the 1980s with the storage issue, this circumstance strained the bond between Ciasca and Malta: 'Antonia got burned by the betrayal of the Maltese [the Museum Department] firstly for the accident of the warehouse and then when they gave permission to Bonanno to start excavating Tas-Silġ.' (1D). Apparently, the Italians learnt of the University project by chance in 1995 when the coordinators of the *Missione* research units went to greet Bonanno as part of their first trip to Malta (1A).

In tackling the topic of the University project the first question to be raised is why Tas-Silġ was chosen out of the many possible sites available on Maltese soil for school fieldworks. The project coordinators thoroughly answered this question. They declared that after the British-Maltese collaboration at Xhagra, which ended in 1994, a new field school for students was sought and Tas-Silġ was particularly appealing in that respect. Being a multi-period site, it offered a deposit that was not exclusively prehistoric, a rare opportunity in Malta: 'Tas-Silġ provided a very good exercise for stratigraphic excavations, one of the most difficult sites and we wanted this to be primarily a didactic excavation, without rush, without pressure, to take all the time we needed' (2C). Moreover it is claimed that at that time 'it appeared to be totally abandoned so we thought: "we excavate there but outside the area already investigated by the Italians".' (2A). The multi-stratigraphic nature of the deposit, a circumstance almost unique in Malta, together with the fact that that there was no on-site activity at the time are adduced as the main points for justifying this choice.

The University set up its own investigations and according to one of the project Directors this occurred 'not knowing that the Italians were going to reopen. We obviously embarked on our own way ...' (2C). Another interviewee suggested that the beginning of the University project initially caused 'some shock waves' as it was perceived 'as an intrusion in an area which the Missione had declared interests on' (3A). Yet another one claimed that: 'it seemed that in their views we were intruders. I think that sentiment was based on the truth' (2C).

According to Vella however the Italian reaction needs to be framed in a fairly different way:

> I knew when the University excavation was already started that the then Director Ciasca took offence at it; she saw it as an invasion in their territory. Maybe she was right since if I put myself in their shoes, the problem wasn't to have other archaeologists on their site but to have other archaeologists on a site, which they were still studying; although 30-40 years had passed you sense that the work is not done until you have publish the final report. In my opinion, maybe, the idea of us standing in their way wasn't to have another team of archaeologists but the worry of a different reading of the evidence (interpretation) and so on. This puts pressure on you as you realize you need to deliver. I think this has been eventually very positive: I reckon that the Italian work after our arrival has taken a pace that it didn't have before (2B).

In Vella's opinion Italians showed an unwelcoming attitude since the circumstance of the new team forced them to confront the failures of their own project. It is not surprising that specific reference is made to the deficiency in the delivery strategy. However, notwithstanding this negative impact, in the long run, this process proved to be beneficial, as it pushed the *Missione* onto a more pro-active path.

7.3.2 Distinctiveness

The circumstance of the University project at Tas-Silġ can be fully understood only in its relationship with the Italian project. Based on this assumption the analysis below focuses mostly on these relational dynamics and does not attempt to assess the project on a strictly scientific ground. There is little doubt that the University project challenged the *Missione'*s position at Tas-Silġ. Claiming a share on the

site *per se* destabilized the traditional construct of Tas-Silġ as an Italian archaeological domain. As one argued, a crucial factor in upsetting this balance was the 'socio-political dimension of the indigenous presence … the addition of the Maltese element' (3A). According to the same source 'it's a post-colonial discourse' that encapsulated the concept of locals challenging the Italian exclusiveness on the site (3A). A member of the *Missione* team acknowledged this aspect and translated it into an advantage for the local element in terms of 'better understanding of the environment (context)' (1B).

On this conceptual ground the University project built its position at Tas-Silġ. It wanted to offer an alternative to the *Missione'*s version of archaeology and to some extent it certainly succeeded in putting this into practice. On archaeological grounds it significantly differs from the *Missione* project in terms of its research agenda and objectives. The investigation strategy was a further element of distinction: an extensive open site in the North area and limited trenches in the South area. The University project was a training excavation so the working teams were quite different: highly specialized and trained professionals on the Italian side, mainly undergraduate students on the Maltese side.

In the words of the coordinators, the main differences were as follows:

> … primarily we wanted to conduct a didactic excavation without time pressure and the other aim was to compare the results from the area we chose with the results from the excavations the Italians [in the '60s], because when we started in 1996 the Italians did not return (2C).

> There were many differences: … using a standard stratigraphic methodology and we stopped once we reached the bedrock. We were tempted to enlarge the excavation but then we thought: "No! We have reached the bedrock, we stop here and we need to publish the results". Our idea was to understand the history of the sanctuary through very limited trial trenches. I don't know whether this has been an advantage or not. Taking into account the difficulty of the excavation, we fulfilled our task (2B).

One points out that due to the surgical nature of archaeological research nowadays and the consequent slower rate of progress:

> It is logistically advantageous to have more Missions operating on a large site; and even the question, problem posed on the south site are complementary but different. So as long as there is discussion, team work and ideally a common research agenda. This would have been a desideratum, I said would have been because the Maltese campaign has now ceased. But in terms of principles, a common research agenda and the presentations of both parts of the excavation were very healthy in this respect. BUT this is a common problem for sites like Pompei for instance, where different campaigns run from different schools are run independently (3A).

Later the University's ability and willingness to stick to the original research plan, was mentioned: 'The University is concluding things, finishing the report, handing the collection' conversely 'we have no idea of when, what, how [the *Missione* project] will be concluded' (3-

1). As seen above in Chapter 5 the *Missione* was widely criticized for not setting clear targets for its research agenda and output delivery. Moreover, the tentative nature of the Italian project worried many who feel 'the research at Tas-Silġ will go on forever' (3-1). The University project had clear timeframe and the publication of the results seems imminent. Admittedly, this was facilitated by the fact that 'the study material is much less vast in comparison to Tas-Silġ North'. Nonetheless the University appeared to be more reliable than its Italian counterpart in this respect. The *Missione* admitted that the University was closer to the final publication of their results.

It is widely agreed that the University project proved to be an extremely valuable training experience. 'It provided almost a lab for the formation of students and eventual archaeologists; and this part has been very rewarding and very informative' (4C). Below is a selection of statements that shows the positive impact of this experience on the professional development of young local archaeologists:

'… it was my first experience as an archaeologist … you deal with the whole span of history which was … a unique experience' (2-1).

'It was a little complicated for me. It was something important for a young archaeologist' (2-1).

'It helped me a lot because as a first experience, excavating a multi-cultural site. I was assistant-supervisor so it helped me to improve my skills. As a student it was a very good experience' (2-1).

Another 'point in favour of the University of Malta' is that 'the information was given out to the public and there were open days every year' (3-1). It is said that these open-days worked well, were quite popular with an attendance some years in the hundreds. They were 'advertised in local newspapers; for two years school pupils from Marsaskala were also actively involved' (2A). The fact of making it

accessible to school is considered extremely valuable as 'at least you open them to the idea of archaeology at this young age' (2B). The strategic importance of offering free access to the site was highlighted: 'this was a big issue: they weren't even stepped inside and they would ask you: is that free?' (2-1).

The value of this outreach experience was stressed again taking into account the fact that 'most of the locals don't even know that there is actually a site close to them' (2-1). Some students described how locals connected to the site by asking about the legends existing around the place. The most common questions addressed to the archaeologists were '*1*) Did you find the golden calf? 2) Did you excavate the well*?' (*2-1) and how difficult it was to go beyond this popular representation of the site. The issue of conveying the site's archaeological significance to the public was amplified by the fact that Tas-Silġ was not 'monumental' and 'aesthetically pleasing, especially the southern part' (2-1). Therefore it is a waste of time to relate 'to dumping and stratification, things like that*.'* (2-1). However it is well worth the effort: 'if there is one day in which at least ten people would understand something that's a bonus, it's one thing in your favour' (2-1).

On this same point, Vella says that people were interested:

> You just need to open the doors and to have a story to tell. As we all know, Tas-Silġ is not easy to unfold but it is possible using a little patience. It's time-consuming as you waste one day of work; you need to be patient to explain, to prepare the hand-outs, to speak in Maltese if you can; if you speak in English as we usually do on the excavation they feel themselves excluded. (2B).

One points out that the outreach programme was not planned at the outset of the archaeological project but was introduced at some point to settle some tensions arisen with the local authority:

> During the first year we didn't even inform the local council. They got offended. Then came the idea to make some sort of open day. Planning it at the outset, on the contrary, would have had a financial adding and they would have given their support - that it is important when you excavate a site. And also it would have not created this conflict between us excavating and them on the watch and reporting to the police because we didn't even tell them: "listen, this summer we are going to excavate the site. You are welcome to see what we are doing. Do you want to help us? - I mean - washing pottery, sewing?" (2-1).

Notwithstanding the clumsy beginning, it is generally agreed that those open-days had the merit of making the effort to reduce the chronic gap between the site and its human landscape. It is also true that the *Missione* has been less active in organising open-days on the North site.

7.3.3 Opposition

The University presented itself as the "other", as the alternative entity to the *Missione*. The *Missione*, conversely, saw the University as an intruder, the enemy that used politics to obtain permission to excavate against the will of the Museum. The relationship between the two entities was built on this confrontational ground and this element alone would be enough to explain why a joined Italo-Maltese project could not be an option. A further explanation can be found in the nature of the

Italian expedition itself (7.2.1). 'A basic explanation could be that the Italian team has connoted its activity as 'Missione.' (1H). Similarly it is claimed:

> Historically the Italian has been an autonomous expedition. … However I wouldn't say that there wasn't collaboration at all. Maybe the project was to carry on with a tradition … at the outset the Missione wasn't born as a joined expedition. This doesn't mean that it can't change but certainly it is affected by the way it was set up in the past (2C).

According to one interviewee from the SCH, not directly involved in the project, this relation was not problematic, as 'the Italians were on the North side. They didn't interfere with one another' (4A). In this view the circumstance of the two projects made perfect sense as long as they both carried out their research independently from one another.

One prominent figure from the University talks of 'a cordial rapprochement' (2C) when the Italians made their return to the site. However, it was 'too late' for a joint project and 'to be honest I don't think it could have been a joined one … because those excavations had been done in the 60s; ours was completely new and I repeat I personally was not aware that they would have gone to reopen' (2C). However, according to another leading figure 'nobody took the initiative to suggest a form of collaboration.' (2A)

Vella, pondering the reasons why such an opportunity was missed, declares 'maybe as a University we should have said: "we start the excavations with the *Missione* Italiana" instead of saying "we want to get access to Tas-Silġ and start our excavations independently from

Missione, which was already there since the 1960s." Maybe already at that point we started on the wrong foot' (2B).

It was not just a problem of project configuration. For the entire duration of the University excavation from 1996 to 2002 the decision makers avoided every form of exchange and communication between the two groups. Working in synergy was never a priority and was generally disregarded by both sides. A regrettable lack of understanding between the two sides, which made it impossible to set up any form of joint research and collaboration, is generally acknowledged. The following quotes clearly convey this sentiment:

'The fieldworks just overlapped but they didn't coexist with a mutual exchange' (1D).

'A dialogue had never occurred and the Maltese Superintendence had never demanded it.' (1H).

'We just ignored each other.' (1A).

Many acknowledge that the lack of data-sharing between the two projects cast a worrying shadow on the scientific viability of the research when they came to cross-reference their results. A leading figure from the *Missione* argues the lack of data-sharing primarily affected the quality of the University project.

> 'The reading of the evidence from this [South] area is complex and strictly related to the interpretation of the deposit in the North enclosure, where the core area of the sanctuary is and where in the same year the investigations by the *Missione* restarted. In an [utter] lack of dialogue between the Italian and the Maltese teams with a mutual exchange of data, it seems to me that the information capability of that area [South] could have not been

> properly exploited. This is at least what emerges from the preliminary report by the University of Malta. However this opinion would possibly change once the final publication of the excavations will be available. (1A).

The underlying idea here is that, although defrauded of the South area, the *Missione* firmly kept its hands on the most important part of the site. It is too tempting to see in this a contemporary version of Cagiano's 1964 announcement 'we put our hands on the most important Punic centre of the island' (6.3.3).

Following on the effects of this separation for the interpretation of the site, others warn: 'If there isn't any sharing of information between the two excavations, how can you interpret the site as a whole? To understand the site fully, you need to cross reference' (3-1). And: 'how we were going to connect what we found and what you found?' (2-1).

The circumstance of the two projects with no interchange whatsoever had regrettable consequences: 'the years of conflict and rivalry between the *Missione* and the University of Malta has ruined what could have been a healthy relationship' (1I). This has resulted in 'a missed opportunity to exchange ideas on methodologies and approaches; something that could have enriched all parties.' (3A). Notable exceptions were a few official circumstances where interaction was forced. The two-day symposium entitled *Tas-Silġ. Its Past, Present and Future*, organized by Heritage Malta in 2008, was the only comprehensive occasion for discussion between the *Missione* and the University Malta.

However, whereas the projects' decision makers perpetuated this short-sighted policy of separation, exchanges of ideas and fruitful discussions were frequent between the most expert segments of the two

teams. As a general trend, it is possible to detect a generational change of attitude: the old school professionals that personally witnessed or were involved in the making of the site since the 1960s were less prone to compromise and negotiate whereas the generations of professionals involved in the process since the 1990s often found it hard to fit into this scheme of divorced archaeology (e.g. 1D; 2B; 3A).

7.3.4 Divorced archaeology: a side-effect

Many of the Maltese professionals that contributed to this study were at some point between 1996 and 2002 also participants in the University excavations, mainly as students. Their insights into this issue are highly valuable. They were the most vulnerable section of the workforce on the site and also the most responsive to the policy of separation perpetrated by the two research entities. No wonder that their memories convey first and foremost a deep sense of alienation and of regret for what could have been a formidable chance for professional growth.

Recalling their time on the excavations, they emphasize the paradox of this policy of separation perpetuated by both Italians and Maltese and how it impacted upon their experience and in the long run upon their professional development.

> It is something small but significant …: it was the Italian site and the Maltese site which says lots because it shows the attitude of researchers … Even it's significant that there is a road in between, it is not just a physical boarder but the attitude towards the site is defined by that road … as a student at the university behind the wall, it is the Italian site and that's it. (3-1).

> The impression was that there was a conflict, almost instantly on site: Tas-Silġ North, the Italians, Tas-Silġ South, the Maltese. … It felt we had divided the site in two, like there was an actual division between the two sites. (2-1).

> We didn't know [about the research on the North side] because it was literally cut off, physically cut off by the road.' (2-1).

Echoing the sense of alienation experienced by the students, other professionals point at the existing road as a crucial element in affecting the circumstance of the two excavations: 'the University, the lower part and the Missione the upper part simply and this happened because the site is perceived as two entities' (4A). The above quotes clearly show how the site was perceived as the sum of two different sites rather than as a coherent archaeological entity. The site layout split into two enclosures divided by a road no doubt amplified such sense of alienation. However, quite importantly, this physical partition was exploited to further polarize the archaeology of the site. As matter of fact, the two research experiences were kept purposely apart and the students, as the most vulnerable section of the workforce were instrumental to this power game.

It is said: 'It was like we were excavating 2 different sites and this is not the case. No continuation with 1960s excavations, no link' (2-1). 'We weren't told that there was an excavation in Tas-Silġ in the past' (2-1). This seeming careless approach to the context, which did not do justice to previous work on the site, mirrored a deliberate attempt to discredit the Italian research: '

> Those rumours that the work of the Italians wasn't good and that they didn't publish. It was constantly this way. … there was this atmosphere that this is ours and they didn't do nothing. Therefore when at the end of the campaign I had to write a report and I saw for the first time the *Missione* reports, it astonished me: "How there's nothing published" It was a mine of information. It's true it was just preliminary but still (4B).

According to another Maltese professional, such propaganda 'perpetuated a negative aura on the *Missione'*s work that appeared unnecessary and uncalled for' (1I).

On the other hand the Italians' attitude was perceived to be unwelcoming 'there was this impression that the Italians didn't even want us to go on their area of the site' (2C). The suspicious attitude of the *Missione* coordinators towards the University excavations had a most detrimental effect on the students' experience. They regretted the complete lack of connection with the *Missione*, feeling that they had missed an opportunity for professional growth:

> It would have been useful to have some of the Italians from the other site, helping us. Having some kind of interaction. Students were not made aware of the various professionals at the Missione. Maybe more students could have used Italian institutions to their advantage (2-1).

One student commented the paradox of this experience: 'We were excavating the dump of the temple so where is the temple then? It's funny but it's true' (2-1).

A clear point on the methodological impact of this paradox is presented here:

> We were still on the learning, we had seen the first pottery. We had very little revision of what we were doing afterwards; we hadn't thought what the pottery was, we hadn't thought what the typology was. When they [the *Missione*] were talking you just stare at them because we tried to make up our own system instead of joining two systems, which makes very difficult for students the follow-up. That's a very basic difference: one has its own agenda, and the other its own agenda but not interlink between the two. … Claudia Sagona said one thing and then you have Quercia saying another thing and there was no correlation. So in that way it is not sustainable (2-1).

7.4 The new Cultural Heritage Management paradigm

7.4.1 The Cultural Heritage Act

Together with the challenge launched by the University of Malta, the reforms brought about by the Cultural Heritage Act upset the *Missione'*s position at Tas-Silġ. When research at Tas-Silġ resumed in the 1990s, the Museum Department was the central authority entrusted with the research, protection and access to national cultural heritage. From 1996 onwards, following a routine established in the previous years with Ciasca, the arrangement for each *Missione'*s campaign consisted of a general plan of activities submitted to the Maltese authority with subsequent verbal approval. Until 2002 the Italian project was carried out under the general supervision of the Museums Department that also provided all necessary support services.

Maltese cultural heritage sector was protected by the Antiquities Act of 1925 up to 2002 when pursuant to the provisions of 'The Cultural Heritage Act', Chapter 445 of the Laws of Malta (CHA2002) the functions of the Museums Department were split between the Superintendence of Cultural Heritage (SCH) and Heritage Malta ('HM'). The provisions established that (Part III. 7) 'the mission of SCH is to fulfil the duties of the State to ensure the protection and accessibility of cultural heritage'. This includes: a) monitoring the protection, conservation, restoration, and accessibility of cultural heritage; b) promoting research; c) authorizing excavations and ensuring that excavation documentation is kept. (Part III. 7, 5: b-e). HM is a national agency with the 'mission to ensure that those elements of cultural heritage entrusted to it are protected and made accessible to the public' (Part III. 8). Along with SCH and HM, the Malta Centre of Restoration was established: the Centre's mission is to become:

> A centre of excellence for the teaching, training, research, and practice of conservation, restoration, maintenance, management and presentation of cultural heritage and to provide conservation and restoration services and consultation as may be required by other bodies (Part III 10, 1 (b)).

In 2005, HM took over the tasks that had previously been assigned to the Malta Centre for Restoration.

7.4.2 Bipolar governance and its effects on Tas-Silġ

Policymakers intended the new organisation of the cultural heritage sector to streamline the management process and to this end two entities with distinct legal personalities and complementary responsibilities

replaced the former Museums Department. As one from the *Missione* acknowledged, in principle, this act created an organic management system for Malta's cultural heritage (1B). However, in actual terms, the boundaries of the roles of the two bodies often overlapped, leaving grey areas, which complicated decision-making. Moreover, the two bodies did not share full synergy and a common vision, which further hindered the development of shared policies and strategies so important to the comprehensive management of the national cultural heritage (1A; 1B).

Tas-Silġ epitomizes the difficulties encountered in the definition and implementation of this new institutional and legislative framework. The spheres of action and the reciprocal responsibilities of the two major cultural heritage bodies in Malta, HM and SCH, are critical as are their respective relationships with the *Missione*. While on the one hand, in accordance with the provisions of CHA2002, HM took over the management of the site through its curators of Phoenician, Roman and Medieval sites, on the other hand, the SCH had full legal responsibility to authorize and supervise any research activities on the site as well as to exercise surveillance over any other operation involving it. Ideally as soon as the Parliament passed CHA2002, the above entities should have worked on the development of an inter-institutional agreement to meet the specific management needs of any given site. This should have identified and coordinated the responsibilities and roles of the regulator (SCH) and of the manager (HM) (1A). In particular, this should have helped the *Missione* to adjust its association with Tas-Silġ in accordance with the terms stated by the law. One from *Missione* admits that these management tools were still at an experimental stage and, as a result, the *Missione* experienced different approaches from the two entities, which 'are not a unity' (1B).

As early as the law drafting process in 2001, the *Missione* expressed its concerns about the future of its relationship with Malta once the Museums Department was split into different bodies. In particular, it urged: 1) to identify one main partner (counterpart) from these three entities; and 2) to regulate its relationship with the Maltese authority by a comprehensive framework agreement (*Missione* Archive). In interviews *Missione* members stress the lack of provisions that, according to one 'would define in practical terms the distinction between the research domain, entrusted to the SCH, and conservation and site interpretation domain, entrusted to HM' (1A). It was also stated that the lack of a solid regulatory scheme at the outset left the *Missione* without clear directions, although it 'has repeatedly urged guidelines on how to relate fairly to each of those entities' (1B). The missed opportunity to formalize and articulate the network of on-site responsibilities as the new law passed, triggered an untenable situation in which the site became an arena of confrontation and dispute over the identification of the accountable and responsible subjects.

The *Missione* – Superintendence association is described as a straightforward and trusting relationship. It closely mirrors the traditional bond with the Museum Department. It is said to be 'a relationship of mutual collaboration, supported by a constant dialogue with the colleagues archaeologists' (1A). This privileged relationship according to some has its foundations in the nature of the activities carried out by the Italians at Tas-Silġ. When the *Missione* decided to discontinue its conservation commitment in 2004-2005, it identified SCH as its only referent on Maltese soil. The Italians were archaeologists and, consequently they were accountable mainly, if not entirely, to the SCH, which is legally responsible for authorizing and supervising research activities. Conversely HM is entirely responsible

for the conservation and display of the site and this means that its involvement in the archaeological process is very limited. From the *Missione* standpoint this unbalanced relationship made perfect sense and one *Missione* member clearly claimed: 'Maltese law is clear on the point and we just comply with it' (1B).

In actual facts, the archaeological project was directly accountable to SCH in line with the provisions of CHA2002 (Article 43). Since the new law came into force in 2003, SCH annually granted permission to the Italian team to conduct excavations. The team submitted a programme of activities prior to each research season and the contents were agreed upon (SCH 21/2003). The SCH permit replaced the informal arrangements previously entered into with the Museums Department. However, beyond these excavation permits, the *Missione'*s research in Malta was never framed by a comprehensive agreement with SCH that set out reciprocal roles and responsibilities (SCH 21/2003). The need to formalise this partnership was always a shared concern, in particular within the *Missione* (MPR/ba; *Missione* Archive). The underlying idea is that a formal agreement with SCH would have possibly spared the *Missione* from direct dealings with HM. It is indeed suggested that the *Missione* identifies SCH as their local, institutional counterpart on research matters and also their moderator in their relationship with HM. A member of the *Missione* affirmed, it was the SCH who claimed this role for itself: 'the SCH wanted to take upon itself the task of being the middleman between Missione and HM' (1D).

7.4.3 The conservation crisis

Since the enactment of CHA2002, the association between HM and the *Missione* has been extremely controversial. It is a complex issue and opinions are divided as to the responsibilities and the faults of each

party. Generally speaking, the Italians tend to make clear distinctions in approaching this theme. They talk about trusty cooperation and friendship with some individuals within the agency and at the same time they describe strained relationships and clashes with some of HM staff (1A, 1B, 1C, 1D, 1E).

Among the points of contention between the *Missione* and HM, conservation is surely a hot topic. It brings up the underlying issue of roles and responsibilities on site and in particular it raises the question of who should be accountable for the conservation and maintenance operations. One Maltese professional suggests that:

> The responsibility for the long-term management and presentation of the site has to be shouldered primarily by the host country. I do not think is reasonable if this is not in the agreements from the start to burden an archaeological mission with the conservation and management of the site unless they are volunteering resources to do that. They are quite distinctive steps so … nothing can blame to the Missione in that respect (3A).

By the same token an Italian respondent believes that the *Missione* could not embark on a full-scale conservation project, as it was not 'equipped' to tackle these kinds of issues:

> It is not just a matter of research objectives: conservation issues require the implementation of specific strategies that usually archaeologists hardly manage to activate; this is particularly true when the investigations are carried out in a foreign country. They are not among the researcher duties. I'm not saying that to justify a non-commitment to

> conservation but it is a field that presents difficulties unmanageable by archaeological researchers (2B).

Others claimed that nowadays 'things are more complicated' since under the current provisions a government agency, HM is entrusted with the conservation of the national cultural heritage. Although there are huge threats to the monuments in terms of degradation, in the words of one researcher: 'I wish we could do more in terms of conservation but I believe this is definitely not our responsibility. When it had the chance, I believe, the Missione made every possible effort to achieve it' *(1E)*. Reference here goes to pre-CHA2002 circumstances when the *Missione* with the proactive support of the Museum Department set up a conservation programme, shouldering all the financial burden of the operation.

Sometimes after the heritage sector was reorganised, the *Missione* stopped its conservation activities and concentrated all resources entirely on archaeological research. Funds were insufficient for continuing or for upgrading the rescue programme: this is said to be one of the reasons for removing conservation from the *Missione* agenda. Many Italian respondents, however, identified the changes in the heritage sector brought about by CHA2002 as the origin of the current impasse on conservation matters. In particular, the lack of direction by the competent local authority was blamed as a key factor in persuading the *Missione* to withdraw from conservation. A Maltese source uses a sound argument to unveil a fundamental flaw in the Italian reasoning:

> Maltese law allows a number of solutions under these circumstances. The fact that the Museum Department responsibilities have been allocated to HM and Superintendence should not modify the role of the

> *Missione* and its duties, as this has not affected the scope and responsibility of the *Missione* vis a vis Maltese authorities. The *Missione* reasoning is not well founded: "you have changed therefore our responsibilities change." This doesn't add up (3-1).

However, according to the same professional, it is actually true that opinions are divided on where the respective responsibilities start and end. This impasse hindered the definition of a comprehensive plan of preventive conservation for the site. This should be an absolute priority as otherwise 'we lose non-renewable resources, which won't exist anymore. If we make the wall and the road in 10-20 years it doesn't matter, conversely those operations where we are losing the archaeology are crucial.' In the same vein, another one states: 'as we speak conservation should be ongoing" and "a plan between the Missione and HM should be in existence underlining how the natural decay of the site is being combated actively' (3-1).

The *Missione* generally denied any wrongdoing on the matter and held HM responsible for the current lack of conservation and maintenance operations on the site. As one claimed 'HM should have adopted and carried on with the programme and the expertise developed firstly by the Missione, however it did not take any action in that sense' (1I).

7.4.4 The bargaining chip

The analysis of the evidence suggests that the discussion surrounding conservation responsibilities is just the tip of the iceberg. One within the *Missione* interprets the seemingly reluctant attitude of the agency with regard to the conservation of Tas-Silġ as a demagogic tool:

> Not to be spiteful but I strongly believe that on the whole they want somehow people to think that the site is neglected because of us. … It is true that they don't have enough money and are disorganized but there is also a subtle intent to show to the public opinion that the site is collapsing since the Italians investigate it. In my opinion, for the people of Marsaxlokk that go past the site every day this is the most obvious association whereas the sites directly managed by them are beautiful: "we put up the shelters, we are protecting them." (1E).

It is suggested that HM somehow uses the degrading state of the monument as a tool to bring discredit to the *Missione*. More broadly some suggested the *Missione* was used as a pawn to settle disputes between the two heritage bodies. One Italian professional argues that the Maltese bodies created by CHA2002 used the *Missione* as 'a bargaining chip' to dispute their own disagreements: 'we are involved in issues that are their issues and often we are used as tokens on a board game, without fully understanding the what, why and how. They definitely used us and Tas-Silġ as a battle ground.' Another respondent brings this point into focus 'I for one sensed that we used to be an instrument in the hands of the Museum Department; and more recently the Missione found itself being a tool in SCH hands to shatter HM arrogance' (1D). According to these views, the local heritage bodies use the *Missione* as a scapegoat for confronting each other. One member of the Italian team emphasizes how *Missione* failed because it sided with the Superintendence:

> Malta is an extremely difficult context; it's divided in two in every respect. The Italians shouldn't have neglected such bipolar reality, and at the same time they should have

> avoided getting caught up in it. You can't take one side disregarding the other one and at the same time you can't fail to consider that both sides exist (1D).

Regarding the divided governance of the cultural heritage and the unbalanced relationship with the *Missione* one of the Italian research coordinators comments:

> There are profound differences … due to the different management policy of the two entities and, also, to the cultural and political history of the island. Therefore from what I sense the Superintendence is more pro-Italian whereas HM is more pro-British. The relationship with the Superintendence is closer and direct; based on mutual trust; conversely with HM as an entity (not on an individual base) it is more difficult … based more on mistrust …also … since HM is closer to the University of Malta. The historical framework makes the two bodies very different. On top of that HM is still a young organisation (1E).

7.4.5 'The management crisis'

The question of conservation responsibilities resonates strongly within HM as does the theme of reciprocal responsibilities but the most critical issue is that HM was excluded from the research work related to the site. As noted above the idea of Italian hegemony over Tas-Silġ and its archaeological material was recurrent in Malta. At an institutional level, HM was the authority, which most resented the *Missione* for what it considered to be their disproportionate power over the site. The *Missione* was urged to cede this power and create new forms of partnership and

synergies in the host country. In tackling this crucial point, some hardly concealed their open resentment whereas some sought feasible ways forward.

HM lamented that it was left completely in the dark about the *Missione'*s research and was excluded from any decision-making processes regarding it. The *Missione* was under attack for not sharing its research results with HM. A professional working with HM complained: 'PhDs have been given out for Tas-Silġ but they stay in Italy' (3-1). And according to another:

> Something that really bothers me is that there are lots of Italians that are doing their studies and PhDs and we don't even get a copy of the works. I presume they give a copy to Superintendence, I don't know, but Heritage Malta being the owner of the site never got copies of these things (3-1).

It is claimed that HM was completely excluded from the research output and that this was in stark contrast with the level of involvement experienced by SCH. This raises yet again, the issue of an unbalanced and polarized relationship between the Italian entity and the CH bodies of the host country, though from a different perspective.

It is further argued that HM was never directly informed by the *Missione* of research developments at Tas-Silġ, but it found out about them by chance 'through seminars, symposiums, sometimes not even held in Malta but held abroad. Lots of results coming out and we were like "ah OK!"*' (*3-1). The Symposium on Tas-Silġ organized by HM in 2006 was seen as watershed in this sense:

> At least we showed that we really want to know what is going on and I think that even from the part of Missione

> there was some acknowledgments: "yes they have the right to get this information as well". It should have always been like that (3-1).

On the data sharing the curators of the site denounced the fact that the *Missione* research archive was lodged with the SCH and HM never received any documents. HM, regarded this practice as unacceptable and in open breach of CHA2002. It claimed that being the national agency empowered by the Government to manage Tas-Silġ, any activity conducted on site required HM approval and all the documentation related to such activities should be deposited with it and become HM property. As owner and manager of the site, HM expects the Italian research archive to be deposited in full with it and by not delivering its archive to HM the *Missione* violated the law. The acquisition of the *Missione* archive by HM seemed to be an extremely difficult task to achieve since it was maintained that the agency was excluded even from the most basic information. 'None of us here (HM) knows what is really going on in that research … we don't know what's happening to artefacts, we don't know anything! We don't know even the methodology that has been used nowadays' (3-1). As it was not part of the *Missione* delivery process HM could properly perform its job on the site. 'The lack of information is one of the crucial points on the site for us as archaeologists to interpret the site and even as site managers, even for us to introduce the site to the public' (3C). And in this respect HM was 'failing the public' since its 'responsibility is not just to take care of the site but also to present it to the public' (3-1). According to another member of the staff

> We are owners of the site but we can't do much on the site because we don't want to intervene in things, which we

> don't know about. … We are not in the position to move forward.' We held by this non-agreement and the worst is that the public look at the site where [there is] always continuous research by the Italians but nothing coming out of it. There is no available data, nothing continuous coming out. (3B).

For some HM professionals the contentious issue was not the passive acquisition of data but a pro-active involvement of the agency as a local partner in the process of data creation. According to one at the root of the problem was actually the exclusion of HM from the process of acquisition of information from the site. In order to solve it, the Maltese body should 'ideally get more involved on the methodology and in the first hand research on the site' and this would be crucial to build 'the information and the interpretation and presentation to the public' (3-1). However this sort of partnership appeared to be extremely difficult to realize as there has always been, it is argued, a divide between local authorities and the *Missione* in the terms sketched below.

> There hasn't been much of an overlap between *Missione* and the local authorities. We are still in this vacuum whereby *Missione* is still doing its deliverables but its deliverables are not discussed, not agreed or achieved with the community; and that's where the big divide starts and I don't know how we are going to bridge that to be honest. *Missione* has a research agenda, I suppose, but we are not part of it.' And this is something that pre-dates the CHA as 'it has always felt as if the site was owned by *Missione* and the Department was just taking the paper to give the go

> ahead; there was never the collaborative project which could happen.(3B)

Another clarifies that the divide nowadays is not between the Italians and the Maltese CH bodies as a whole but between the Italians and HM: 'they come and they call us just one week before so it's a bit of a situation! … The situation, we believe, cannot stay as it is: they ask permit to excavate to SCH. OK! But HM is the manager of the site' (3C). A crucial point is the production of knowledge derived from the investigations at Tas-Silġ that the *Missione* has always kept exclusively to itself. And this according to HM is a dysfunctional and illegitimate exercise of power. HM urges that this unbalanced power relation should be corrected. To achieve this goal requires the 'definition of a master plan*'* (3-1) by the Maltese and Italian parties. In the same vein it is urged 'to come to a point where the data is available, the research agenda is set together and the way forward is mapped out as a committee between Superintendence, HM and Missione' (3B). The real challenge to this process is an alleged reluctance of the Italians to commit to a new form of partnership with Malta in virtue of 'a sense of ownership of the site which has been in its prerogative for a number of years' (3B). Further it is argued that the Italians:

> feel they are in position of power when they are not and they feel that having ownership of the data is enough to let them run … the Missione sees HM as the site keeper: "open the door, close the door, give us the keys, we are coming". We know that the excavations starts when it is already on as you come here for the keys. And then after a couple of days we receive a letter sent from Italy at the very last minute. (3B)

By the same token it is sensed a sort of arrogance in the way the Italians interact with the agency 'for example when I go to the site, all the time: " you should do this, you should do this for us!" But then I asked for help: "oh, we can't help you" (3B).

From the HM perspective the future of the Italian research is subject to the definition of a master plan with Maltese parties. Under this the role of the Italians needs to be thoroughly renegotiated and its exclusive control over the research would no longer be an option. Failing to reach such an agreement would result the *Missione* being banned from the site as the curator of the site overtly stated: 'If the Missione is not going to sit around a table with us, I fear worst things can happen … things can get rather dramatic' (3B). And precisely, by the same source:

> We can impose a tough line to Missione but I don't want to reach the point: "Thanks. This finishes here and from now on we will carry on with the research" … this wouldn't be good for the site: Missione has a crucial role. It holds the information from the 60s, which we don't have, It has great research potential (3B).

This climate of strained relations recently reached a breaking point. Following the last disregarded request to receive a copy of some research documentation, and a meeting held 'with a view to regularizing the Missione's position', HM denied access to the site to some members of the *Missione* in Malta. Notwithstanding the gravity of the decision, taken unilaterally by the Senior Curator of the site without consulting SCH, this circumstance forced all the interested parties to tackle the Tas-Silġ case as a top priority. In the aftermath of the incident a new season of consultations and discussions between SCH, HM and *Missione* started in which all the parties expressed their commitment to 'collaborate

towards the study, conservation, security and public enjoyment of this monument of national importance' (SCH 21/2003). In this spirit, the *Missione* was requested to deposit its full research archive with both SCH and HM, and to set a new plan for the imminent publication of excavations (SCH 21/2003; MPR/ba). However, this alleged cooperation was just a flash in the pan, as the chronic disharmony and lack of synergy between the parties are anything but eradicated. Notwithstanding the strained relationship, one interviewer in Malta believes that things will improve soon:

> I am a great optimist in these things. I have seen things going much better sometimes with the contribution by the younger members of the Missione so I firmly believe that even in the frame of the CHA there is a potential for very positive synergies; at this moment in time we are not there yet (3A).

7.5 Discussion

The previous chapter addressed the process of knowledge construction that linked the *Missione* and the Tas-Silġ site according to the theoretical principle that making archaeology is a collective and displaced enterprise in which archaeological facts are settled and archaeological professionals are established as privileged interpreters of material past. This chapter discussed how the privilege granted to the *Missione* over the Tas-Silġ site has been negotiated and challenged. The debate on archaeology by outsiders as presented in 2.5 set out the theoretical grounds to this discussion.

Chapter 4 presented how the first *Missione* involvement in Tas-Silġ could not be explained merely by using the binary category of colonial/postcolonial. The development of the Italian investigations

activities in Chapter 6 confirmed the difficulty to label this experience into precise categories. The *Missione* was certainly an Italian expedition but the long-term and deep-embedded nature of its engagement with the site makes it difficult to outline a clear-cut division between local/foreigner elements within precise boundaries.

Despite all the difficulties to define the link between *Missione* and Tas-Silg according to fixed categories, the modes of the Italian presence in Tas-Silġ is nowadays probably anachronistic and it clashes with basic principles of post-colonial archaeology, as defined by Gosden (2001, 2004). The unilateral (Italian) nature of the team, the lack (or, perhaps, very limited) exchange with local practitioners and collaboration on equal terms with local institutions are all evidence of an asymmetry of power that highlights *Missione* prominent role as interpret of another country past.

A real post-colonial shift in the relation with *Missione* has been often advocated in Malta. This should take the shape of an active involvement of Maltese subjects in the investigations of the site, ensuring therefore, mutuality based on material culture in the relationship between Italians and Maltese, which overcomes Maltese traditional dependency on the knowledge shaped and controlled by the *Missione*. According to one Maltese professional, however, the real post-colonial move for the *Missione* might be to step outside the comfort space of Tas-Silġ and employ its resources on other Maltese contexts in danger of being swept away by the rise in the island's real estate developments. Drawing from Bernbeck and Pollock (2004) analysis this perspective is equally interesting in terms of post-colonial discourse because shifting to other sites would mean to interrupt the process of accumulation of detailed knowledge from a single site that since the 1960s has been key tool in *Missione* hands to create and maintain power.

In a post-colonial perspective the University project challenged the Italian control over the making of archaeology in Tas-Silġ. In actual fact, it was a locally driven project whose specific purpose was to train a whole generation of local professionals. It succeeded where the *Missione* failed: a temporally defined research agenda, a low impact research strategy, and a commitment to creating a bond with the local community. Ultimately, this project demonstrated that the Maltese had the power and the capability to question the Italian exclusiveness on the site. It is far too tempting to see in it a strategy purposely adopted by the University to expose the *Missione* weaknesses and, ultimately, to undermine its position. The powerful post-colonial message of the University project did not last long, disappearing behind radical divisions and animosities.

The University, Museum and *Missione* are all responsible for missing opportunities for bridging the gap between foreign and local elements and imprinting a radical shift in the making of the site. More recently the bipolar governance of cultural heritage in Malta has somehow accommodated each party's interests, enhancing the divided nature of the discipline. The *Missione* is certainly to be blamed for its short-sighted and neo-colonialist approach to making archaeology in Malta. On the other hand, the host country through its institutions and governmental bodies has done nothing to figure out a feasible way forward. It seems that they have been too busy feeding their antagonism and defending their parochial horizons.

In principle, activating more balanced forms of partnership with the host country would take the *Missione* on a real post-colonial path. The reality is much more complex when deep-rooted fragmentation and chronic antagonism that dominate the local archaeological and heritage sector is taken into consideration. In this perspective Tas-Silġ

has become a privileged ground for testing to the limits such divisions and tensions. It follows that the *Missione* should not be regarded as a foreigner but as a partner and a contender on a very Maltese battleground. This point takes the discussion back to start, leaving open the question on how suitable are colonial/postcolonial categories to define *Missione* presence in Tas-Silġ (2.5).

7.6 Conclusions

The evidence presented in this chapter showed the set of challenges facing the association *Missione* - Tas-Silġ. The analysis also revealed how Malta attempted to come to terms with archaeology managed by outsiders, who traditionally controlled the discipline. The *Missione* is an updated version of this old paradigm of making archaeology and the different approaches to it are informative of the Maltese struggle to define and to turn into practice post-colonial archaeology. However, the concept of archaeology by outsiders in its own right cannot comprehensively define the parameters of the role played by the *Missione* in Tas-Silġ, and, ultimately, its identity.

From conversations with professionals, it became clear that the link between the *Missione* and Tas-Silġ requires a multilevel analysis. While on one side it epitomized all the negative aspects of a colonial power-relation (and as such it was a legacy that Malta strives to confine to history), on the other hand it was part of the Malta's archaeological heritage and it was an invaluable resource. In this respect, it is generally agreed that the Italian research was pivotal to the development of Maltese archaeology.

The knowledge and the expertise derived from such long experience are vital. However these resources are firmly in Italian hands. It is precisely the Italian control over the production of knowledge

derived from the site that has been questioned. Although the tenor of the claims varied greatly, a common thread can be detected in most of the discussions. Italian research has a future at Tas-Silġ and Malta, only on the condition that it loosens its exclusive hold on the site, creates new forms of partnership with the host country and welcomes local elements in the making of the site.

A new form of partnership between host country and foreign team that goes beyond the anachronistic power relation of archaeology by outsiders is a wish shared by both Italians and Maltese. In principle this is a realistic task that should involve negotiations on the extent of the reciprocity and on the respective responsibilities and duties. However, when the perspective shifts to the host country, it becomes apparent how the same idea of a bilateral negotiation between Maltese and Italians is in many respects an unattainable target.

In chapter 6 the Italian's missed opportunity to relegate the *Missione* experience to the past was discussed. In this chapter there was tackled the shameful circumstance of the overlapping Italian and Maltese projects, which closed the doors on the most elementary principles of scientific cooperation. The most relevant element is the striking polarity between the two parties that the divided layout of the site facilitated. In turn, the peculiarity of the site has been masterly exploited to achieve a thorough, and at times confrontational separation. The long period of co-existence between the *Missione* and the University projects in the north and in the south area respectively was marked by a total lack of synergy and knowledge sharing. Over the years, the leaders of both projects maintained a reciprocal attitude of firm antagonism and hostility. It should be noted that other members of the teams were not necessarily in agreement with this narrow-minded policy. What is also striking is the

opportunity missed by the Museum to negotiate a point of encounter between the University and Italian projects.

The above is one instance of the polarized nature of Maltese archaeology, which took on an institutional form with the CHA2002. With the split in responsibilities between SCH and HM, Tas-Silġ becomes stage of confrontation between the two Maltese entities and between HM and *Missione* with the mediation of SCH. Here again it is an inbalance in power relations that animates the debate: while *Missione*, backed by SCH, makes archaeology in Tas-Silġ, HM manager of the site demands a share of this making. Conservation and management issues are clearly reasons of a controversy that points again at the Italian control of the site.

Chapter 8 **Tas-Silġ: An island within the Island**

8.1 Introduction

As detailed in the previous chapter the circumstances of the investigations at Tas-Silġ have generated in many local professionals a deep sense of alienation and exclusion. This chapter specifically addresses some key issues relating to the material and intellectual dissociation produced by the making of the site.

> Simply looking at that boundary wall and simply from what I have picked up from the watchman and the general behaviour of people around the site, I think it is fitted into a (and this is quite paradoxical and ironic) postcolonial paradigm of archaeology by outsiders in which the moment a site is declared important and starts to be watched for excavations, it somehow becomes divorced from the landscape … Same problem in the context for Neolithic monuments: the process of expropriation, creation of boundary walls and detachment from the landscape. (3A)

In the opinion of this professional the process of detachment that occurred at Tas-Silġ follows a well-established paradigm of postcolonial archaeology carried out by foreigners (Grima**,** 2005). Indeed, at Tas-Silġ all the above elements are present. The land expropriation and the erection of boundary walls are the material acts that signify physical and conceptual isolation of the site from the landscape. Chapter 6 highlighted the extent to which Italian control over the archaeological process has

marginalized local professionals. The circumstances of the investigations, a history of failed dissemination and virtually inexistent site interpretation complete the picture.

This analysis starts with the series of acts that produced the physical dissociation of the site from its context extending this reference to available published sources. The site of Tas-Silġ is not simply material evidence of a millenarian occupation, but also evidence of two pieces of land circumscribed by a solid wall, now partially replaced by a metallic fence. These features are functional to the archaeological investigations and they define the site's layout. More importantly they indirectly contribute to shaping the site's identity. These complementary features need to be examined to comprehensively frame the multifaceted theme of alienation at the Tas-Silġ site, and ultimately to define the site's identity. The analysis below first considers firstly the process of acquisition of the land declared to be of public interest for the purpose of the excavations and then it deals with the double features of the road that was built prior to the making of the site and of the boundary wall.

The second part of the chapter addresses the interplay between physical isolation and the circumstances of the investigations, discussing how this mutual interaction affected the perception of the site and of the archaeological activities. In this section, the enquiry examines the forms of interaction existing between inside and outside, showing how outsiders engage with the site and vice versa, how insiders connect to the outside.

8.2 The land, the wall and the road that made the site

8.2.1 A land of archaeological interest

Prior to the 1960s excavations the unmistakable evidence of ancient occupation on the hill behind the Monastery was scattered across a series of small plots of privately owned land, mostly used for agricultural purpose. When the plans for an Italian project were still in embryonic shape, the Museum Director, Zammit in 1963, advocated the introduction of a regulatory scheme to secure to the Government the section of land of archaeological interest in the Tas-Silġ area. In his opinion the question of the land was a priority to be tackled in accordance with the provisions of the Antiquities (Protection) Act – 1925 (AA). Zammit obtained the estimated value of 13 units of lands of archaeological interest from the Director of Public Works and the full list of landowners and tenants from the Commissioner for Land (Figure 8-1; Figure 8-2) (MUS 22/63: 1, 4). Concurrently at Zammit's request the Attorney General drafted a warrant to be served on each owner of those 13 plots in terms of Section (13) paragraphs 1 and 2 of the AA (MUS 22/63 I: 5-10, 40). A lease agreement between the Ministry of Education and the owners was then stipulated (Sub-section 2, Section 13 - AA).

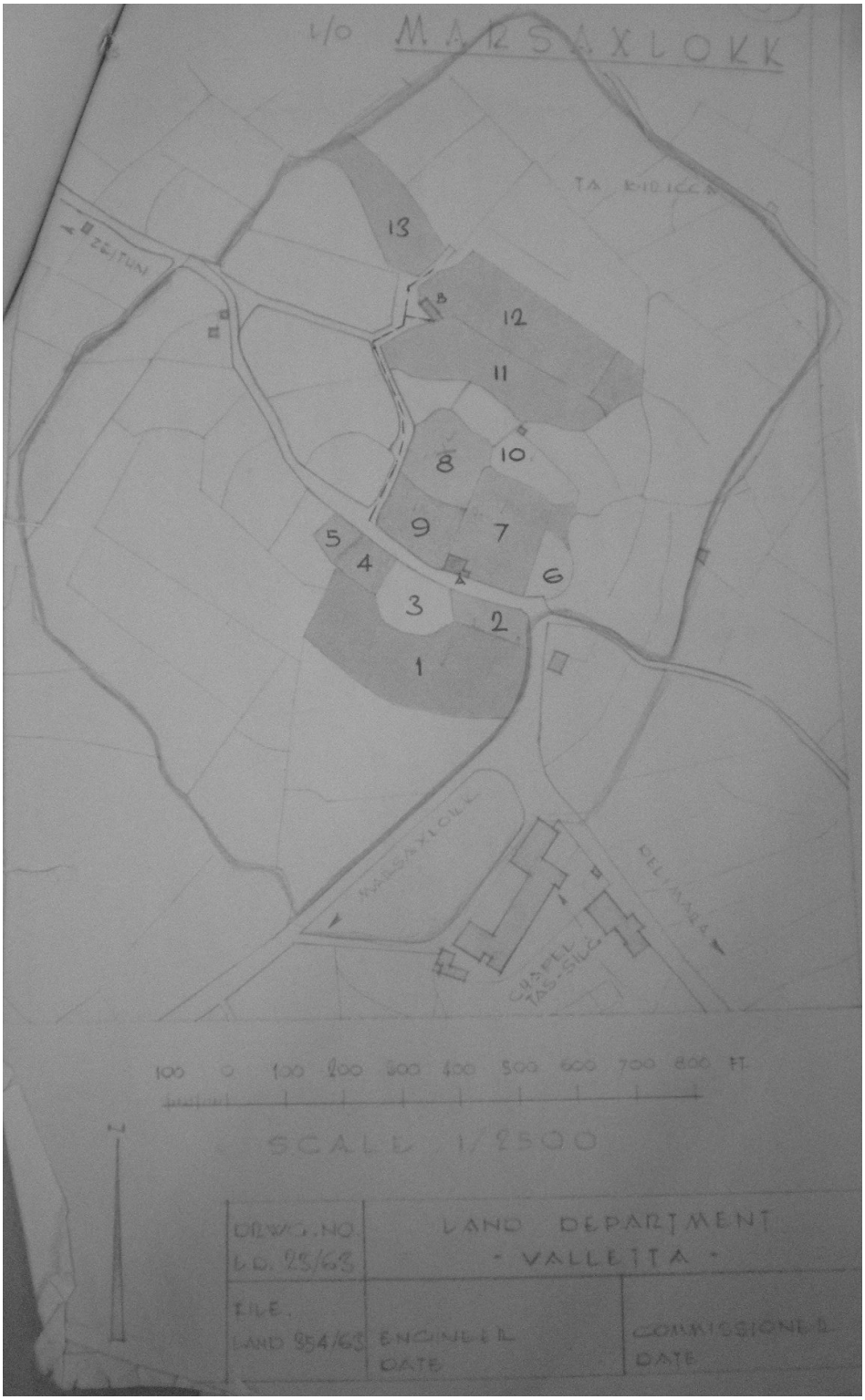

Figure 8-1: Units of land of archaeological interests map (MUS 22/63, 4)

Figure 8-2. Aerial view (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

Following a standard procedure, every owner was notified that the Museum intended to carry out archaeological excavations on his land. Landowners were also requested to inform their tenants that excavations work would be commencing in the immediate future. Attached to Zammit's notification was a warrant under the Minister of Education's hand that read: 'Whereas it is intended to carry out excavations in the undermentioned land for the purposes of the Antiquities (Protection) Act, 1925, (Chapter 90), I hereby declare such excavations to be expedient in terms and for the purposes of sub-section 1 of the section 13 of the said Act' (MUS 22/63 I: 41, 47-61). As a measure of compensation the Government paid a rent according to the amount of rent payable by each tenant. With a few exceptions, it was generally agreed that the same tenants would receive the payment and pass it on the landlords in the ordinary way (MUS 22/63 I: 108).

The rental process did not encounter any substantial obstacle and the decision to pay the owners for the duration of the excavations was generally welcomed. It should be noted that only eight of the thirteen plots of land originally rented by the Government (namely 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10 - Figure 8-1) were extensively excavated during the nine years of on-site research. In 1965 the Museum and the *Missione* agreed to erect boundary walls that encompassed these eight plots: small areas of plots 10 and 7 were excluded, as were the remaining five plots (5, 6, 11, 12, 13). The landlords remained the legal owners of the thirteen fields until 1968 when the Government acquired them by absolute purchase (Malta Government Gazette, 6th August 1968: 2113-2114). In notifying the expropriation for public purpose no distinction was made between the plots inside or outside the walls.

The wall, however, did in some way determine the degree of importance of those plots of land. This became apparent when the excavation work ceased. The Museum readily relinquished the plots outside the wall for cultivation purposes whilst none of the land within the walls was ever released irrespective of its actual archaeological value and research potential (for instance plots 1 and 10) (MUS 22/63: 197, 198, 214). Interestingly, some portions of land ended up outside the wall for practical reasons and not on the basis of scientific considerations.

The Museum also worked hard to create a large buffer zone to prevent any building development in dangerous proximity to the site and to save the area for future investigations (MUS 22/63I: 149, 159). The area was declared of historical interest and this made it virtually impossible for landowners to obtain building permits at least for the duration of the excavations (MUS 22/63 I: 5, 189; OPM 295/63). The situation changed considerably when fieldworks ceased. The integrity of the buffer zone was seriously endangered as soon as locals realised the

Missione would not be returning to the site and that they had no intention to extend the investigation to the area outside the walls. Private owners and the Government officially questioned the need for a large buffer zone. One of the private applications to release portions of the buffer zone shows how the decision-making evolved on that matter. In 1973 Mr Victor Licari submitted to the competent authorities an application for a building permit on his own tenement, located to the south of the site. The Director of the Museums, Mallia, initially accepted this request because he knew the *Missione* had no plan to carry out further research beyond the existing boundary walls. Before making his final decision, though, he submitted the case for Ciasca's consideration (MUS 22/63 I: 185, 186).

Ciasca confirmed that there was no plan to resume excavating but she suggested maintaining the buffer zone as it was for the sake of this unique archaeological context. Cagiano endorsed Ciasca's view because he firmly believed that an ancient town, linked to the sanctuary, existed on this slope of the hill (MUS 22/63 I: 149, 187, 188). Mallia agreed with the *Missione* 'on the imperative need' to preserve the zone in its original setting; at the same time he had to admit that no investigations were planned 'for as far ahead as one can foresee' (MUS 22/63 I: 197) Based on this argument, he advised the competent authority against Licari's application (MUS 22/63 I: 189).

This and similar rejections for building development certainly triggered a sense of dissatisfaction and resentment towards the Museum and the Italian archaeologists. They were responsible for keeping this area undeveloped even though there were no signs of archaeological activities and the site itself appeared to be abandoned. Since 1975 the Lands Department also inquired into the matter of the buffer zone. In compliance with a policy of not leaving public land abandoned, it repeatedly requested that the Museum provide an accurate picture of the

land actually used in connection to the archaeological research (MUS 22/63 I: 214-221; 229-230).

The documentary evidence shows a clear evolution in the general attitude toward this land scheme. At first, while the excavations were progressing it worked quite well, allowing the Government to secure the area of the site for research purpose and to prevent building development in a wide zone around it. Later, when excavations ceased, attitudes changed considerably. The general impression formed from the documentary sources is that the Museum was burdened with a huge responsibility and an uncomfortable position to maintain. It was indeed caught between core principles of safeguarding a monument of national importance and the not less important commitment to offer a satisfactory explanation to private individuals and the Government. The patent disengagement with the site by the research team, the principle beneficiary of this policy, made the Museum's task extremely hard. Furthermore, the protection of the cultural heritage was possibly the very last concern of the then national leadership. Despite all these challenges the Museum somehow succeeded in sparing this area from building development with a few notable exceptions.

Mirroring on a smaller scale what happened later with the storage issue, the Museum had to deal with this situation virtually alone. The *Missione* simply provided recommendations from the comfort of its outsider position. The Museum had to govern the clash between the competing identities of this piece of land: on the one hand an important archaeological and historical resource, and on the other hand an unused area with good development potential.

8.2.2 Protecting the site and the archaeological investigations: the walls.

The issue of protection/access of the Islands archaeological heritage is not new. We know that as early as 1962 Zammit submitted to the Government a request for erecting a protection around the major prehistoric sites of Mnajdra and Ħaġar Qim (NAM, ME 35/63: 1, 2). However when excavation in Tas-Silġ started probably no one would have expected this issue to become a priority for the *Missione* and the Museum. The excavations at Tas-Silġ rather unexpectedly attracted the curiosity of a huge number of local people. A major newspaper reported people gathering around the team at work and wandering across structures and trenches when it was away (Times of Malta, 5 November, 1963, 7; 8 November, 1963, 9). Soon after the first campaign, the Minister of Education Paris noticed with satisfaction that the first-class archaeological results from the fieldwork appealed even to common people (NAM, ME 35/63-47).

A concern over the security of the remains and of the archaeological research counterbalanced this positive observation. As early as 21 November 1963, Zammit in a letter to the Commissioner of Police addressed the issue of the increasing number of visitors on both sites excavated by the *Missione*. He pointed out that the number of persons visiting the excavations had increased to such an extent to make the job of civilian watchmen almost impossible (Figure 8-3). He reported as example the circumstance of 'a bus load of school boys roaming the ruins besides other visitors who came by private cars'. At the bottom of the letter he asked the Police to take this matter in hand and to ensure the constant presence of a constable from dawn to dusk 'pending the erection of suitable barbed wire entanglements' (MUS 22/63: 77).

Figure 8-3: The excavations in Tas-Silġ were immensevely well received by the locals; those pictures are taken before the boundary wall (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

The temporary solution of the police guard lasted much longer than planned. Zammit's plan of surrounding the site by a barbed wire fence was warmly welcomed by the *Missione* (NAM, ME 35/63: 48; MUS 22/63 I: 99). However finding a provider of the fence turned into an exhausting obstacle course. Therefore, while suitable arrangements were attempted to erect a barbed wire fence, the Police Department agreed to guard the site until further notice (MUS 22/63: 99; MUS 114/63: 36).

Delays in the authorization process by the War Department, which was supposed to provide the material, a contention with the Trade Union over the labour force required for the job, and a lack of funds in the Publics Works Department and in the Museum to independently undertake the job forced Zammit to give up the idea of a fence and to look for a feasible alternative (MUS 22/63 I: 81, 83, 84, 91).

The Tas-Silġ site still had no boundaries in 1964. During the second campaign the Curator of Archaeology, Mallia, requested as a matter of urgency the Director of Information to supply 40 posters for the sites of Tas-Silġ and San Pawl Milqi, reading in both Maltese and English as follows: 'MUSEUM DEPARTMENT. No one is allowed to enter this site of excavation without official permission' (ME 35/63: 61). At the end of the 1964 campaign the erection of some sort of barrier around the site became an absolute priority. To the end Zammit pressed the Financial Secretary to include the necessary expenses in the estimates for the following year. The Museum and *Missione* shared the view that physical isolation of the site was an imperative to ensure its preservation. Amateur archaeologists and 'modern vandals' were identified as the major threat to the remains (MUS 114/63: 38).

The idea of a solid wall then took shape. All the necessary arrangements for erecting a wall in Globigerina limestone ashlars were soon made. In February 1965, the contractor Alfred Schembri took the job and building operations started promptly (PW 2935/64; MUS 114/63: 42-43). In March 1965 the sections of the walls facing the Zejtun-Delimara road were built making the road about 2 feet (approximately 61 cm) narrower (MUS 22/63 I: 131). In May the construction work was completed and the Police Constables were finally removed (MUS 114/63: 45, 55). The solid wall was an alternative to the original plan but it proved to be the right choice. At the end of day, material and skills were available locally without having to rely in any way on the War Department, which was reluctant to help the Museum on this specific matter. It goes without saying that the limestone blocks lasted long and were easy to replace when needed (MUS 22/63: I-82). The only drawback was the high cost of the wall: its estimated value was £ 2,10 Od per square canna (about 4 sqm) (MUS 114/63: 43, 45).

Nonetheless it was felt to be a sterling investment because it ensured the long-term protection of the site and allowed the archaeological research to proceed peacefully without interruptions. Even today the wall is considered as the most effective protection measure of the site against the general lack of conservation. As one pointed out it has also: 'luckily limited vandalisms (Per fortuna il muro ha limitato gli atti vandalici)' (2B).

This structure certainly prevented a visual connection with the site and generally speaking made it more difficult for non-authorized people to freely wonder across the structures under excavation and to cause damage. However, a variety of sources show that the wall has not really prevented un-authorized access. Certainly looting and vandalism, which were rare occurrences even before its erection, have not stopped. A few months after its erection an episode of vandalism was reported: unknown persons forced the door that gave access to the northern enclosure, stole the polythene sheeting used to protect some outstanding structures of the sanctuary and dug sections of the deposit in search of valuable objects (MUS 22/63 I: 133). As a consequence the Museum resolved to employ a person to guard Tas-Silġ (MUS 22/63 I: 138).

Locals confirm that the site has always been accessed for more or less innocent strolls (5A; 5B). High quality capers grow there as does rocket, so the site has always been a very popular destination for seasonal picking (5A; 5B). Locals also report minor lootings from the site (5A; 5B; 5C).

This research suggests that the wall has first and foremost succeeded in shaping the site as a secluded space, an island within the island. As the most monumental feature of the site, up to very recently it has sharply demarcated an outside and an inside space. The wall has also certainly contributed to the intellectual and social dislocation of Tas-

Silġ. The two dimensions of material and conceptual detachment, however, have not necessarily shared the same path. In addition to the high walls, the circumstance of the road that splits the ancient remains has created further alienation. The combined effect of the physical barrier and the road caused a double isolation: the site as a whole from everything beyond the walls, and the two enclosures separated from each other.

8.2.3 Breaks in the wall

The walls were erected around eight of the thirteen plots originally rented by the Government in connection with the *Missione* activities. The area included within the wall became the archaeological site according to a paradigm largely used in the definition of prehistoric monuments (Grima 2005, 54-55). However, in 1971, when an aerial photograph taken by a retired RAF pilot of whole archaeological site became available for the first time, the archaeological community realised that the wall cut off unmistakable remains of the first occupations of the site (plot n. 6 -Figure 8-1). The circumstance was on the one hand of paramount importance for a general understanding of the extent of the remains but, on the other hand, it showed for the first time how inaccurate the wall was in spatially defining the site (Cagiano 1973, 97-98, 100).

Although it was now realised that the boundaries of the site were inaccurate, no action was taken to revise it until very recently. Following the collapse of the section of the wall right behind the eastern entrance to the prehistoric temple in 2009 (Figure 8-4), HM had the wall rebuilt and included within the site area all of plot 6 and portions of plots 7 and 10 (Figure 8-1; Figure 8-2). The prospect of increasing the site

particularly pleased the *Missione* eager to extend prehistoric investigations in that area (MPR/ba).

HM erected a traditional dry stonewall to mark the extended boundary of the site. This partly recreated a visual connection between the Tas-Silġ hill, the coast and the sea. After this first collapse, another followed in the South area: a metal fence replaced the stretch of wall that used to face the road (Figure 1-8). Future studies could possibly investigate how these unintended breaks in the wall affect the existing in/out dynamics in terms of visual and conceptual connection.

Figure 8-4: Collapse of section of the North-east wall behind the temple: inside and outside views (photographed by Anna Maria Rossi).

Although only recently put into practice, replacing the wall with less obstructive protective measures has been object of a series of projects since the 1990s. In 1995 the Italians submitted to the Maltese authorities an updated version of the project set up in 1993 by Ciasca. It suggested demolishing all the walls facing the public road and deviating the road towards Marsaxlokk valley. The objective of this project was to join the two areas of the site and display it as unified entity.

The idea of replacing the wall on the whole length with a metallic fence was put forward for the first time in 1999 (Figure 8-5). A team of local architecture and engineering students worked on a project aimed at

improving the site's infrastructure and layout and, ultimately, at opening it to the public. Key objectives were a new boundary, basic infrastructure for visitors, and the deviation of the road (Aquila *et al.* 1999).

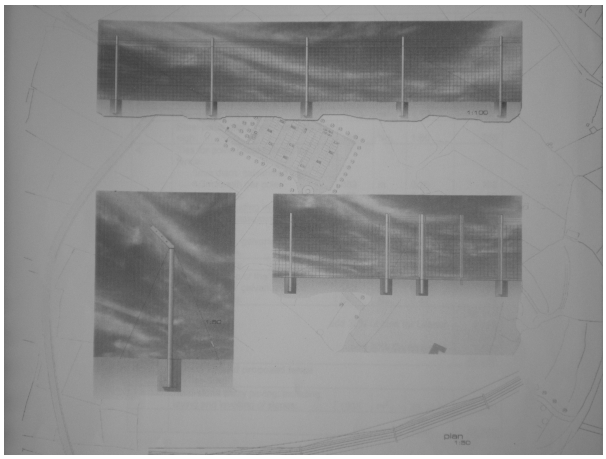

Figure 8-5: Project for a new boundary (after Aquila *et al.* 1999, 13)

The 1990s projects shown above suggested deviating of the public road in order to recreate the spatial continuity of the monument. The question of the road has been discussed since the sixties. As early as 1967, on the advice of the Museum and the *Missione*, the Planning authority submitted a plan to divert the road, by-passing the site and restoring its cohesion (Figure 8-6) (MUS 22/63I: 147, 148, 150, 151). The planned diversion pleased some landowners. Some of the plots originally included in the buffer zone would have fallen, according to this plan, to the South of the new road and thus became detached from the archaeological area. The landowners thought this would have made the authorities ready to relinquish them for private use (MUS 22/63I: 164, 165).

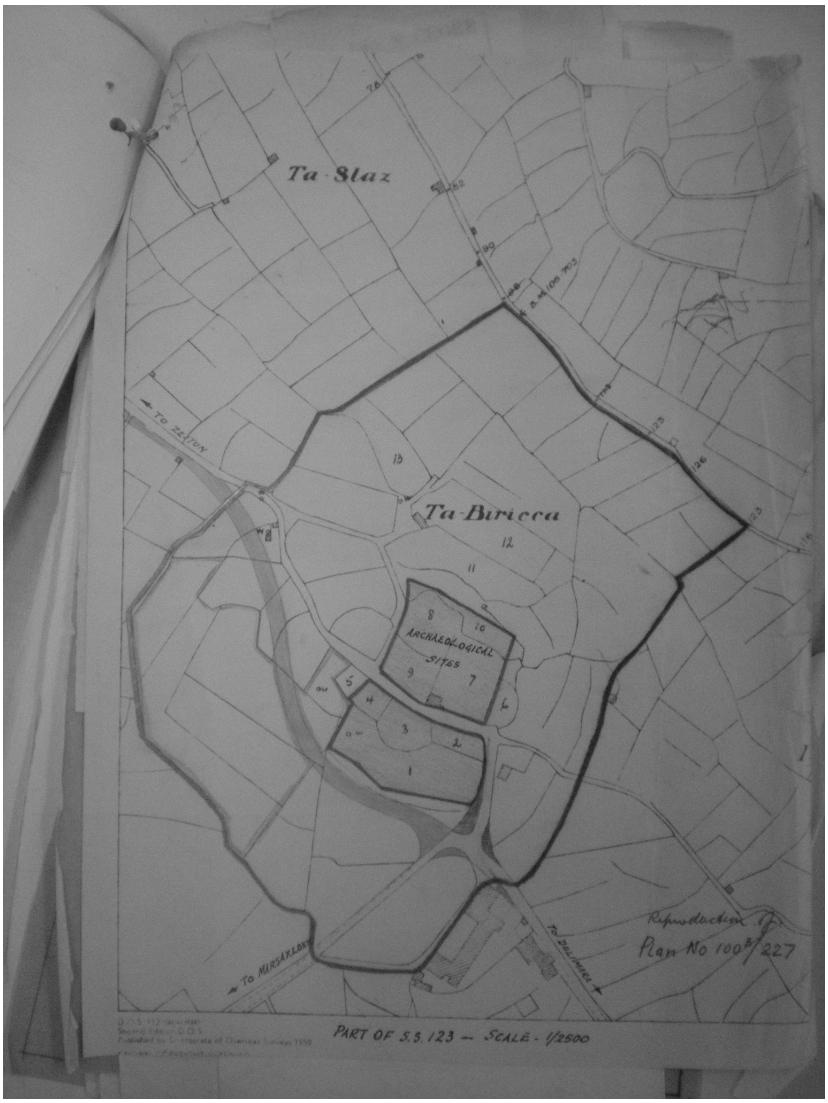

Figure 8-6: 1967 Plan for road deviation (after MUS 22/63I, 151)

These hopes were dashed because the road deviation never happened. The proposal was still up in the air in 1971 when the aerial photo further emphasised how the road altered the cohesion of the site. The road deviation issue has catalyzed considerable intellectual and planning resources, involving both the Local Council and the Planning authority (Marsaxlokk Bay Local Plan 1995 - MT05; MUS 22/63 II: 273).

8.3 Interplay between physical, intellectual and social dislocation.

8.3.1 Isolated archaeology

The physical dislocation as produced by the above features has played a crucial part in shaping the intellectual and social detachment of Tas-Silġ. In particular the wall has made the site a secluded space, an island within the island. As the most monumental feature of the site, up to very recently it sharply demarcated an outside and an inside space. In addition to this, the circumstance of the road that divides the site into two has created a further fracture. The combined effect of the physical barrier and the road has brought about a double isolation: one of the site as a whole from everything beyond the walls, and another of the two enclosures reciprocally set apart. It would be, however, misleading to assume that these features are primary cause of the site's detachment from the local surroundings and from Maltese archaeological context. This cause lies rather in the combination of these physical elements and of the politics of archaeology as developed in the half a century of activities that have shaped the site's alienation. The same interconnection can be followed in the intellectual and physical dislocation of prehistoric sites in Malta (Grima 2005, 54-55). The interplay between physical and intellectual isolation is not a fixed and unilateral phenomenon, which impacts only on who is not engaged in any way with the making of the site. It is a subtle reciprocal process that affects both insiders and outsiders (Grima 2005, 54). At times the walls more or less subtly affect the perception of the site and of the archaeological activities by outside. At times the physical isolation is instrumental to intellectual detachments and segregations.

The wall undoubtedly stood the test of time well as the first significant collapse occurred in 2009 and it certainly allowed research to be conducted away from unauthorized eyes. However we have formed the idea that this physical barrier has had a detrimental effect on the Italian research team, and on the second *Missione* in particular. The physical isolation contributed to defining the mental and conceptual detachment of the Italians from their surroundings. It prevented them from responding appropriately to the changing reality of the host country and from critically rethinking their identity against this backdrop. Once they passed through the door, they entered a reassuring physical and conceptual space where they felt at home, where they could focus on their scientific endeavour and forget about all the other issues. On a specific archaeological level, beyond a general scientific focus on the monument on the part of the research units involved in the project, we believe that the physical barrier has somehow limited the research horizon of the *Missione*. The wall made it difficult to project the research beyond its confines and to connect the site with its historical landscape. The researcher remembers how sometimes she felt the need to climb on the roof of what was left of the original farmhouse to get a momentary sense of connection with the surroundings.

The circumstance of the prehistoric investigations has not substantially changed this research frame of mind since the aspiration to extend the excavation involved only a small portion of land outside the original limit. In opposing this plan the Maltese authorities and the new heritage policy conveyed the message that the research space allocated to the *Missione* was the one defined in the 1960s. *Missione* control could be tolerated in the name of this well-rooted tradition and only within this territory. The lively debate surrounding the renegotiation of this spatially confined control was documented in Chapter 6. Only one source alters

this paradigm and suggests putting an end to the bond *Missione* - Tas-Silġ and freeing both parties (Section 6.)

8.3.2 North – South alienation

In the 1960s, excavations were carried out on both sides of the Delimara – Zeijtun road that cuts through the ancient remains. To protect the remains under excavation in 1965 a double wall, bounding the two portions of the site, was built. This produced the anomaly of two separated enclosures that revealed their power to alienate in the 1990s when the Italian and Maltese projects overlapped. 'Corridor through alien territories' (3A) is the eloquent quotation on the identity of the road over that period.

As was previously discussed (7.3) this layout made the existence of the two projects possible. The initial settlement assigned the South side to the Maltese and left the North side to the Italians. The manner in which the relationship between the two groups was managed took their physical existence to a further level and Tas-Silġ became the sum of two different archaeological sites. The generation of professionals trained at that time is a unique source of inspiration on this matter (7.3.4).

'It's significant that there is a road in between, it is not just a physical boarder but the attitude towards the site is defined by that road' (3-1).

The road in-between physically mirrors the approach to the site by the two teams, and their reciprocal relationships. The Italian side '… was literally cut off, physically cut off by the road' (2-1). 'It felt we had divided the site in two, like there was an actual division between the 2 sites' (2-1).

The archaeological alienation produced in those years did not end when the University project finished. The North side became an

Italian territory more than ever and due to its growing scientific importance it became a synonym for Tas-Silġ. The South side, once the Maltese team left, became destitute, an in-and-out space. The physical reunification of the two sides would hopefully mend this laceration.

8.3.3 Outside – inside encounters

Before the construction of the double wall, locals were allowed to visually participate in the making of the site, as they could somehow fit into that process and foster a sense of belonging towards the material past gradually being unearthed by the archaeologists. Since its construction the wall prevented this connection. Interestingly, while archaeologists engaged in shaping an important chapter of Maltese history, the material past used for this purpose was kept in a peculiar isolation, open to few and inaccessible to most.

In this context the decision to put up a limestone wall rather than a fence has a significance that goes far beyond the technical question of the material used. However, as long as there were excavations the *Missione* engaged successfully with the outside world and to some extent made the locals part of the archaeological process, compensating for the lack of visual connection with the making of the site (Figure 8-7). The effective dissemination strategy put in place in those years was directed mainly to a small, highly educated sector of the local population and only, marginally, to other segments of the population. Still, it was an effective way to ensure the Maltese remained interested in the Italian research at Tas-Silġ.

It can also be argued that the archaeological practice of the first *Missione* was paradoxically more open and inclusive than its contemporary version. The project, indeed, relied on a relatively small team of professionals and a large number of workers and on occasions

few Maltese guests and volunteers (Figure 8-9). The 1963 campaign at Tas-Silġ included only four Italian professionals, including an epigraphist (Giovanni Garbini). This number gradually increased over the years, involving professionals and students from the University of Rome and the Catholic University of Milan (Times of Malta, 26 November 1963, 5; Pos IVO B/11 Prot. 1285; NAM, ME 35/63: 75).

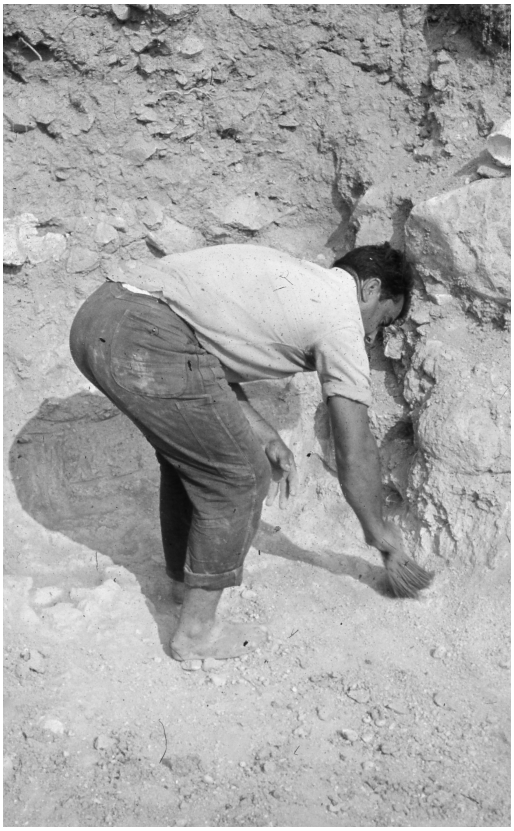

Figure 8-7: 1960s excavations. Archaeologists and locals working side by side (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*)

Maltese students voluntarily offered their help throughout the investigations as was first agreed by Cagiano and Zammit (MUS 22/63 I: 16-18, 22). Foreign students were occasionally involved: for instance in 1965 young English and Swiss researchers took part to the investigations (Times of Malta, 18 November, 1965, 4; Moscati 1966, 15). Maltese scholars and members of Maltese governmental bodies joined the Italian team. Mgr. Prof. Coleiro contributed to drawing the historical context of

the site. The National Museum generously offered its scientific and technical expertise. From the first campaign Zammit was officially part of the *Missione* activities as the representative of the Maltese authority while the next in line, Mallia studied the prehistoric evidence from the excavations and contributed to the annual reports. Museum photographers and conservators were constantly attached to the *Missione'*s activities, with specific reference to the work of the conservator P. Busuttil and the photographer J. Spiteri. Engineers and technicians from the Works Department (in particular Michele Ellul) were also involved in the fieldwork (Moscati 1966, 15; 1967, 15; Ciasca 1966, 25; 1968a, 13; 1969a, 13; 1972a, 15; 1973a, 15).

The extensive and intensive job required a huge workforce and to that end the *Missione* employed a large number of locals on a variety of tasks. From a contemporary standpoint, what is striking about those excavations is the disproportionate number of workers compared to the number of professionals. This is particularly evident in 1963 when this ratio was 2 to 10-15 (MUS 114/63: 11/1, 11/2). However, it is fair to say that at that time this numerical disproportion was not at all exceptional on excavations: the professional team mainly coordinated the work of the labourers and only in close proximity to 'a discovery' it was actively involved in the excavation work, data collection and recording. The Publics Works Department, through the Museum, provided the labour force annually required for the excavations with the exception of the 1968 campaign. Wages and National Insurance contributions for each workman were anticipated by the Museum and refunded yearly by the University of Rome through the Italian consulate (Times of Malta, 8 November 1968: 7; NAM, ME 35/63: 90; MUS 22/63I: 26, 27, 31, 42).

I was lucky enough to meet a lady from Marsaxlokk who had the privilege to work with the *Missione* during the 1960s and possibly

further on after the end of the excavations (Figure 3-2). She must have been a teenager when Ciasca offered her a job in this very informal way:

> I was passing by the excavations and Professoressa called me and said: “do you want to work?” I said: “what sort of work”; Professoressa: “you just have to clean them...come and see”. Professoressa showed me the boxes of cocci and all the tools for washing. “Ok I will come”. When you are young and you don't have money. “How much you work I pay”. Was good money! As much I washed, as much I earned.’ “Do you know someone that wants to come and work” then I called my friends, my neighbours. We were a team. When I close my eyes I have memories of myself working here (5F).

The recollection of someone else from the local village that was just a school-age boy is revelatory of the kind of inclusiveness that was part of the 1960s Tas-Silġ excavations (Figure 8-8). It shows how the relationship between the Italian team and the local labour force worked and how the archaeological practice was built around it. It is not surprising to detect in this man’s account a blend of real and imaginary facts, even if this ambivalent narrative in no way diminishes the informative value of his account; it is possibly true the opposite. Here are some of the most interesting passages of the long conversation we had:

> Let me tell you, studying as an archaeologist I never did … I was interested in history and when they came to school I said “yes I will come as a volunteer”. But I wanted to moving slowly and understanding what archaeology is. When I used to cut the soil and you could

see layers obviously I used to be interested but the one that used to write, the Italian, he used to write only in Italian. They never let me do sketching and writing over there (Figure 8-8). So when I used to go home if it was during school time we write down certain things because we had one of them who could speak English and we had the Head teacher who used to tell us "look this means this, this, this means this…" but at was very young at that time from 9 to 11…Not anymore after that. When I found something then they stopped me and sent me somewhere else. Then the Italian archaeologists will come, they continue and they do it themselves. And they used to put a tent so nobody could see. Nobody enters, only them. And then they make a rope here "*NON ENTRARE"*. When they dig it, it was in a box. They don't let to see everything… They used to give us 4 feet by 4 feet area to keep going down up to 1 foot and then they excavated again. And if they think there is something there, you know, then they will start to do the sketch, the flooring sketch. Then if for instance here they found the stairs, on this area they triple the size for the search. You start go a little bit stronger and the more down you go you use more the brush … This is how it was. I cannot tell you what they used to say, the Italians. Sometimes they used to talk dialect language (5B).

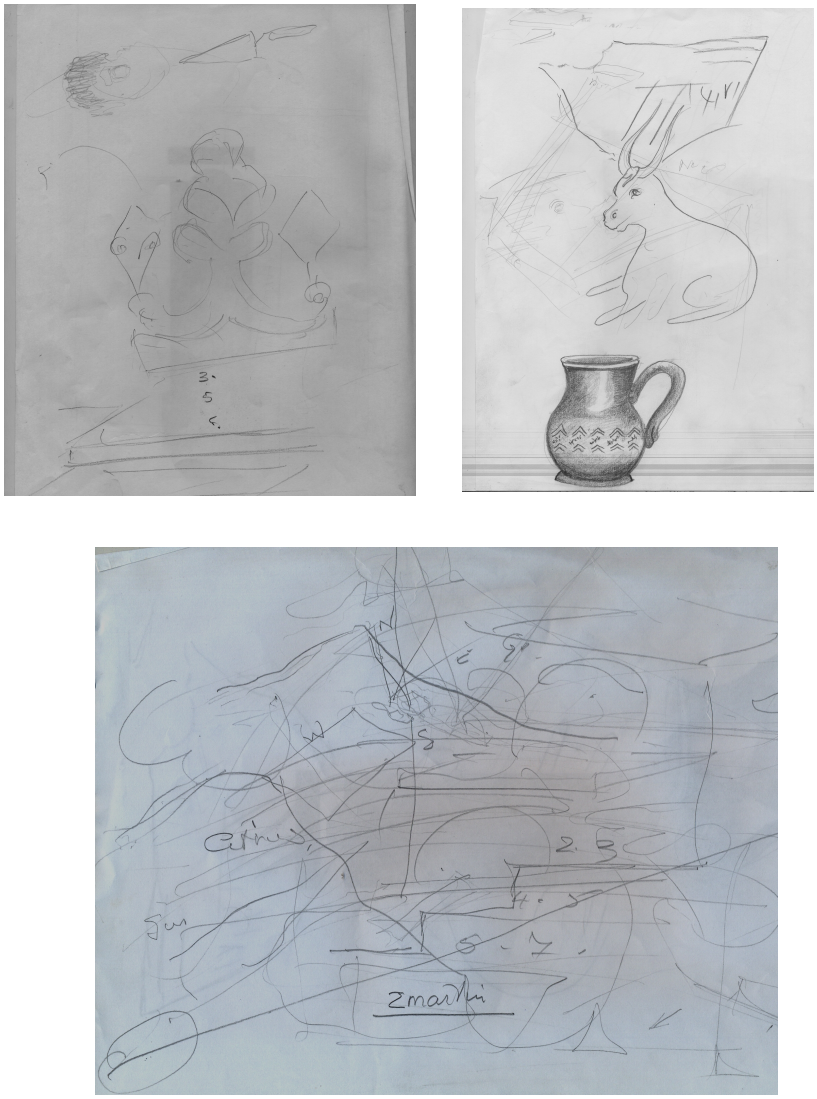

Figure 8-8: Drawings that supported the conversation with 5B (reproduced courtesy of 5B)

From a contemporary perspective the locals actually took part in the archaeological process. However the interviewee maintains that they were excluded from the juiciest part of it, the discoveries. Physical and intellectual barriers were created by the Italians to avoid external intrusion in what at that time was their exclusive job. Notwithstanding all constraints the interviewee confirms that it was an important learning experience: it fed an interest in how the past materializes in the present. Other young fellows might have shared similar sentiments. At the same time, however, the segregating nature of archaeological practice

suffocated their enthusiasm and overall paid a high price in terms of perception of the research. On this topic our source offers an extraordinary interpretation:

> Let me tell you what happened then. There was rumour in Marsaxlokk that they found the bull; they found things, which they are taking for themselves. But in Marsaxlokk no one knew what archaeologists did. Everybody would have taken happy from himself without telling anybody because that is in your heart. If you like grapes and you are passing by a wine tree and would see very nice grapes you would touch one for sure, for sure! If the chef is making the food, positive he will touch it. What happened is that when this rumour started they even more took advantage of not to enter, not to go in certain times (5B).

He also makes an important distinction in reporting his relationship with the Italians. Once again among the Italian team the distinctive personality of Ciasca emerges.

> There was this woman, what's her name again? She was absolutely nice woman. I used to take her to Marsaxlokk, let her meet with people. Archaeology and fishing wasn't together. But she used to enjoy because she made lots of friends. Once you know people and if you knew people at that time they were lacking of education. Some of them they will be frighten, some of them they don't want to meet because they might be strangers. But when they used to see her with me they used to talk to them. And you had to have the confidence at that time otherwise people they won't talk to you. I used to tell her "I'll sketch it for you".

> When Ciasca was there she always let me do the work, even drawing, sketching. She used to love my things, and she used to say "good, good because this makes me faster" (5B).

Notwithstanding the many concerns of the 1960s approach in terms of local inclusion, it created a real bond with segments of the population, that were *de facto* excluded from the official delivery programme set by the *Missione*. This precious connection terminated during the post-excavations phase (Chapter 5) and it was never recreated.

8.3.4 Widening the gap

The circumstances of the post-excavation research, which abruptly interrupted those links, have already been addressed (6.4). The inter-related circumstances of the physical isolations, of research management and of the broader political context progressively extinguished the original interest and, contextually, fed a profound sense of disengagement with the site and mistrust toward the people involved in its making. During the 1970s and 1980s the site remained archaeologically untouched in its isolation. However, the wall built to protect it did virtually nothing to contrast the process of degradation of the exposed features. In addition, the *Missione*, although it meticulously carried out valuable work in the basement of the monastery, became virtually invisible. From an outside perspective (one of the people not involved in decision-making) the Italian archaeologists abandoned the site and abandoned Malta. Even the few who were involved in this process, first and foremost the Museum Department, possibly experienced an unexpressed sense of betrayal when the *Missione* eventually left.

It is reasonable to think that within the local community the combined effect of physical and conceptual detachment, evanescent archaeological research, and site degradation triggered a profound sense of mistrust and resentment towards the Italian researchers and the national authority that supported them. Documentary sources confirm that some owners of the tenements around the site questioned the land scheme imposed by the Museums Department in the face of such obvious abandonment of the archaeological remains. Those sentiments were exploited politically in the contest of the confrontational MLP and NP relationship. On the highest political level it has been reported that 'even the Prime Minister Mintoff, who notoriously wasn't particularly into these things, apparently in 1986-87 visited the site and was really disappointed [by its ruinous state]' (2A).

Within this framework the rumour that the Italians kept for themselves the objects of their discoveries took a more defined shape. In Marsaxlokk the idea that the Italians took away everything precious and important from the site is still quite widespread. The abandoned state of the site and the 'disappearance' of the Italian archaeologists for decades was certainly conducive to ideas of this type. One still moved by profound resentment claims: 'this issue of the Italians is not just an opinion, it's what happened! They stole everything important and left only rubbles' (5C). Another respondent who happens to be his wife confirmed that the Italians stole everything and added that Ciasca rented their flat in the 1990s. The Italian archaeologist invited her on site and explained that all the materials were collected somewhere in Birgu (5D). Clearly Ciasca's attempt had very little effect on the rooted assumption of the Italian robbery.

Since the 1990s there was a general feeling that something should have been done to correct this extremely negative perception of

the archaeological research at Tas-Silġ. Conservation and presentation projects (6.5) should be interpreted in this light. Very little was achieved in this sense and both archaeologists and national cultural heritage bodies are deemed responsible for fostering this detachment and for making no effort to connect the site with the local community. Even Marsaxlokk Council admits that it is powerless and cut off from any decision-making regarding the site: 'The site doesn't belong to us but to Heritage Malta' (5E).

As seen in Chapter 7, the Italian research team and the Maltese cultural heritage bodies never established a long term inter-institutional agreement that would have underpinned proper actions of social inclusion. It has been presented how the relationship with the 'public' was used at an institutional level, as the case of the relationship between HM and the *Missione* clearly shows. HM introduced this element when it blames the *Missione* for not sharing the data and the knowledge acquired at Tas-Silġ:

> The lack of information is one of the crucial points … for us to introduce the site to the public. HM is failing the public since its responsibility is not just to take care of the site but also to present it to the public (3-1).

> We are owner of the site but we can't do much on the site because we don't want to intervene on the things, which we don't know about. … HM held by this non-agreement and worst is that the public look at the site where always continuous research by the Italians but nothing coming out of it (3B).

The *Missione* conversely blamed HM for not taking action on conservation and presentation matters to discredit Italian research in front of Maltese people (1E).

The conversation with Marsaxlokk Council demonstrates that this alleged attempt to discredit the Italians in front of the local community has not been a complete success. As the plate put up outside the North area reads, HM owns the site. The alienation of the site from the local context involved the Italians as much as the central authority that manages the site. It is quite interesting to note that the colonial-postcolonial discourse of the foreign exploitation so often used by the professional community to define the complex social identity of Tas-Silġ clashes on a local level with the idea that basically Maltese Heritage bodies and foreign archaeological team are the two side of the same coin. From this corner of the island of Malta they both are external, overarching forces that exploits the local resources and do not give anything to the locals.

8.3.5 *Missione* disengages

The local community knows little about the second *Missione*. For many, the Italians came to Tas-Silġ in the 1960s and that is all. A series of factors are to blame for this. On a specifically archaeological ground, *Missione* employed very few workers and only for short periods of time. The development in the archaeological discipline would mainly explain this shift:

> Archaeology is become more labour intensive whereas in the sixties you can conduct an excavation with 1 archaeologist supervising an area and 10 labourers digging up the deposit nowadays all material has to be excavated

> by specialized people. Missione currently employs only people with master level qualifications or higher (3A).

However, this contemporary, scientifically flawless dimension of the making of the site widened the gap between insiders and outsiders and the combination of physical and intellectual barriers contributed negatively to how the archaeological activities are perceived: 'high walls only perpetuate the negative stereotype of archaeologists being leeches on taxpayers' (1I).

Figure 8-9. Left: team of archaeologists and non-archaeologists in the 1960s; right: research team in the 1990s (reproduced courtesy of *Missione Archeologica Italiana a Malta*).

An inadequate dissemination of research is another key factor. A Maltese heritage professional maintains that in this respect a series of efforts have been made:

> During the II chapter with some prodding from Maltese colleagues, participants were sometimes reticent about dissemination of new discoveries partially because they thought there wasn't an audience for that. But we did persuade them that not only there was an audience interested very keen to hear any news from excavation, but

> also supportive and friendly audience which was very excited about it. As a result of that succession of presentations … Immensely well received. A bit of language barrier of sort: most Maltese people with average education either speak Italian reasonably fluently or at least understand it. But it would have left out a portion of the population but the same portion which would have been left out or less likely to attend if the presentation would have been given in English; and even presentation in Maltese has comparable barriers so nothing to blame (3A).

In the above lines a sound point is made on the barriers, mainly linguistic and intellectual in this case, existing in delivering specialist information to non-professionals. Particularly interesting is the parallel between Italian and English, as both are languages of outsiders and they necessarily impose some barriers. As reported above to avoid the linguistic issue, the University outreach project was delivered exclusively in Maltese (Section 6)

Worthy of note is the insight that some sectors of society were unable to access a whole spectrum of information and ideas irrespective of the language used to convey them. Those dissemination actions greatly contributed to 'raising the public profile of the site and even public awareness of the contribution of the *Missione'* (3A). However, it is admitted that 'much more could be done' *(1D)* but this applies to all archaeological sites and all archaeology in Malta. Notwithstanding the more or less fruitful initiatives to raise the public profile of the archaeology in Tas-Silġ, it is believed that people in Malta are generally unaware of it. 'What people know of forty years of excavation? What

did get out? Yes, ok books had been written but only technical books and people in the street because these are the majority of people what do really know about Tas?' (4A). And by someone else: 'I doubt very much that people are aware of excavations and of the fact that the *Missione* is involved. It's further away from the public eyes' (5G).

It is agreed that the upcoming new permanent display on the historic eras at the National Archaeological Museum in Valletta will greatly help in that sense. 'The *Missione* has worked with HM and provided them with outstanding artefacts for exposition. Therefore, Tas-Silġ and the *Missione*'s work should get a worthy boost amongst locals and non-locals once the exhibition goes public' (1I).

On this point HM credits itself for greatly contributing to the public visibility of Tas-Silġ not only thanks to the new Museum display 'at least the people will be made aware of what there is in the site which is always closed by walls*'* but also thanks to the 2006 symposium when 'it was the first time that the site was open to the Maltese public' (3-1). The *Missione* itself acknowledges that despite some efforts more should been done to raise the public profile of the research. One team member explains this failure with the fact that the circulation of archaeological data outside the scientific community is a quite recent practice and it is only recently that professionals became aware of its importance (1B). It has been shown above how in this respect the first *Missione* was paradoxically more inclusive. This was not set as a target but it was rather more an unintended consequence of their making archaeology.

One respondent in particular made an effort to establish the causes of what he believes was an unsuccessful dissemination history. This is by far the most interesting contribution to this discussion as it catches the essence of the problem. Basically, the argument is that the

failure in terms of dissemination reflects a chronic disengagement of the *Missione* from the human context where it operated.

To be more specific the second *Missione* can be held responsible for keeping its research out of the public eye: 'In the opinion of the general public, the Italians have never published' (1D). All that to be explained with the fact that the *Missione* decision makers tried to be non visible in Malta. Ciasca was reluctant to make the research public and she brought her personal discontent to an institutional level:

> After what happened Antonia didn't care to be a visible entity in Malta… she was devastated by the relationship with Gouder and by the University of Malta; circumstances that deeply hurt her… she didn't want the Missione to be a visible entity in Malta. In the 1990s the Missione was back but no one knew that (1D).

It is said that in the post-Ciasca period things did not substantially improve since the *Missione*'s board basically wanted to stay in the shadow, and it was not interested in connecting with the host country. This was the outcome of an uneven disposition of the *Missione* towards the Maltese between close friendship and resolute opposition.

It is further stated that this approach was not necessarily confined to Maltese people and institutions: the *Missione* is alleged to have maintained a similarly detached attitude when dealing with the Italian Embassy. 'Once I said to the Director: "Listen, the Ambassador wants to know in advance when we will be back, if we are publishing and if we have a publication plan for the future." I told her that the Ambassador was like her director and she replied: "I don't have any Director" (1D).

The *Missione* displayed a loose sense of commitment towards its major diplomatic parent body and a general reticence in sharing data. Broadening out this issue of the isolation of the *Missione*, the same researcher offered further food for thought:

> Once back home the Missione doesn't bother about Malta. You can't forget about a site and deal with it only when you are there. Malta is obviously a place where things keep going on and it is important that you take care of it because what happens in Malta affects what you would be able to do there when you will be back: huge mistake (1D).

Remarkable here is the emphasis on the fact that the *Missione* confined its connection to Malta to limited periods of time. Such a fragmented commitment is bad for the site but, most importantly, it compromised the Italian presence at Tas-Silġ. In essence, if the *Missione* does not actively contribute, it will soon be isolated and, possibly, replaced. In order to avoid such disappointing outcome, it needs to deliver more, more widely and more consistently. Further it needs to be strategic in diversifying its network of relationships and in keeping them constantly alive. Enjoying a privileged position acquired half century ago, it is suggested, will drag it to an uncertain and unpromising future in Malta.

8.4 Discussion

One of the theoretical key points of this thesis is that making archaeology is a collective process that involves associations between humans and non-humans. The investigation of the archaeological making of Tas-Silġ has so far mainly presented human actors in the process, unravelling complex and multilevel chains of association that

connected archaeological professionals, Maltese authorities and institutions to this archaeological entity. This chapter looked at the non-human side of the process and namely at the site as powerful mediator of human actions. As discussed in 2.3, the site not simply transported human actions but it transformed and extended them, becoming capable of agency since it can produce changes in the course of others actions (Latour 2005). The materialisation process of Tas-Silġ is a powerful example of the ways a site in its materiality can affect human actions and extend them beyond original meanings (Latour 2005; Gell 1998).

In particular the mediating role of the twin wall is evident in many circumstances presented above. Even if it was built to ensure a peaceful accomplishment of the archaeological activities and to protect the remains, it has had a pivotal role in defining the identity of the site and in mediating approaches to it in both professional and non-professional communities. It identified the space of the site so that what was left outside became instantly less relevant in archaeological terms. The arbitrary definition of the limits of an archaeological monument and the consequences of it in terms of relationship with the landscape and in terms of research approaches were discussed in the context of Maltese Prehistoric sites (Grima 2005, 53-55).

In Tas-Silġ the paradox of this arbitrary act was clear as early as 1971 when an aerial picture showed that the remains extended to the East outside the wall. However this area was included in the site only recently when a section of the 1960s wall collapsed. This sudden event somehow authorized professionals to monitor the area outside the space of the monument. This circumstance as well as the controversy on an Italian investigation in this area newly acquired to the site show that the decontextualization of the site has an inside and outside face. The detachment from the landscape as a consequence official and academic

appropriation and interpretation of places of archaeological interest has a crucial impact on the ways local communities perceive the sites and themselves in relation to the archaeological making of the sites (Grima 2005; Odermatt 1996). This detachment had an equal crucial impact on the people involved in the archaeological making, the essence of which has been captured in relation to archaeological investigations carried out on Maltese megalithic sites (Grima 2005, 54-55).

The analysis of the evidence from Tas-Silġ shows that the isolated nature of the site has affected the ways investigations are carried out, interpretation constructed and research teams relate to each other and to what is outside the walls. It has been detailed the crucial role of the twin walls together with the road that cuts the site in two in reinforcing the reciprocal segregation of the Italian and the Maltese projects and in feeding their confrontational relation. With specific regard to the Italian research, the wall justified and fostered its monument-centre research approach, guaranteed its research autonomy and reinforced its disengagement from the Maltese context. It also defined the space allocated to their research in front of the host country. In this sense there can be read the unwillingness of the Maltese authorities to allow the extension of the *Missione* investigation outside the space traditionally defined by walls.

Its detachment from the landscape had a detrimental impact on the way the local community related to the site and the archaeological investigations. A chronic lack of dissemination activities and a substantial disengagement of *Missione* from the host country has been registered since the 1970s. It can also be said that a close and isolated site kept alive the sense of professional and authoritative construct also during the decades of abandonment. This no doubt facilitated the return of *Missione* in the 1990s.

Moreover, the concept of the transformative role of archaeological investigations (Lucas 2001a; 2001b) as presented in 2.3 is the theoretical root in developing this point. With hindsight, the walls were erected just two years after the beginning of the excavations. At that time the site was still in the making and vaguely resembled to the monument delivered by archaeologists with the end of excavations in 1971. In tackling its detachment from the landscape one cannot avoid to consider that this site was shaped and has always been a professional construct. Even its physical layout is the result of this '*destructive construction*' to quote Johnson (2001). This somehow challenges the idea of a relationship with an original landscape, which is at some point in time has been interrupted. The relation with the landscape is constructed and negotiated within the same process that has shaped the archaeological monument.

The process that in the 1960s established Tas-Silġ as archaeological fact has been considered in section 5.3. The layout of the site as presented in this chapter is the material rendering of such successful process. The combination of powerful interpretation and material shaping established Tas-Silġ as a building-block of Maltese archaeological heritage according to the principles set in 2.2. However in the 1970s the site was not anymore the *locus* where archaeology was in the making and in the abandonment it endured for decades, it engages in new associations and transports new meanings (Latour 2005). The physical detachment fixed in time the idea of Tas-Silġ as Italian domain with all positive and negative consequences. In the 1970s and 1980s the site became primarily the material legacy of the Italian robbery and of the *Missione*'s scientific and ethical failure. At the same time this same detachment and associated connection with the *Missione* played a role in

the construction of the narrative of continuity between 1960s and present day projects.

From an archaeological perspective, the return of the *Missione* in the 1990s set a delicate process of reconciliation between the displaced archaeological process and site and artefacts that were left behind. They once again became part of the laboratory, to use Latour (1987, 2005) narrative, where archaeological facts are constructed (2.3).

8.5 Conclusions

This chapter considered the isolated nature of the site from the combined perspective of the infrastructures instrumental to its making and the intellectual alienation, which accompanied this process. By bringing together these complementary perspectives, the analysis showed the various components of site isolation. Physical detachment from the landscape is only one of the many pieces of this complex jigsaw. As the development of the archaeological practice demonstrates, unexpected encounters between inside and outside can occur even if there is no visual connection. And conversely, frightening signs of deep detachment can be found in the contemporary dimension of the site, even though concepts such as inclusiveness and participatory processes are often debated.

The shaping of the site as a secluded entity occurred mainly during the 1960s. The peculiar layout of the two divided clusters closed by walls became its distinctive mark. The wall was a protective measure for this precious relic of the past and virtually became part of the site itself. With the passing of time it became an imposed barrier that seals off a piece of Maltese heritage. In the 1960s the site was an Italian intellectual and material realm. With the 1970s - 1980s circumstances the Italians relinquished the materiality of the site but retained the

intellectual domain, dislocating the archaeological process through other means. However the physical detachment, despite the state of abandonment endured by the site, preserved the connection with the *Missione* and facilitated its return.

Chapter 9 **Conclusions**

9.1 Setting the target

At the outset of this work it was postulated that years of archaeological investigations have been instrumental in shaping conceptual, intellectual and material space of what is Tas-Silġ archaeological site (1.1; 1.4). Two main research objectives were then set to unpack this dimension of the archaeological making of the site, to unravel the tensions that have accompanied this process, and to give voice to the whole gamut of participants in defining, negotiating and challenging it (1.4).

A first objective was to understand the collective process that established and maintained a foreign archaeological team as privileged spokesperson of the material pasts unearthed in Tas-Silġ by micro-excavating 1) political and intellectual foundations of the relation between *Missione* and Tas-Silġ and 2) the circumstances under which it thrived in the first place, then failed and has been rescued amid tensions.

The second objective addressed major impacts of this long-lasting relationship against Maltese political and intellectual decolonisation. In particular it assessed 1) the extent of the *Missione* control over the site and the archaeological knowledge derived from its investigations; 2) how the position acquired by *Missione* in Tas-Silġ fits in the context of the decolonisation of the discipline in Malta; and 3) how archaeological process and site materiality have acted on each other to produce forms of intellectual and physical dislocation.

In addressing the above issues, this research reaches the following conclusions on the situated complexity of archaeology in Tas-Silġ and uses those arguments to set a space of discussion on the ambivalence of foreign archaeology in decolonized contexts.

9.2 Making archaeology in Tas-Silġ site: a postcolonial conundrum

The Tas-Silġ site is a contested territory. Much of this unsettled status is linked to the specific circumstances of its investigations and the privilege position acquired and maintained by *Missione*. The Italian presence at Tas-Silġ is founded on a contradictory and heterogeneous combination of colonial and postcolonial principles. The *Missione* was formally the product of postcolonial power structures and countered colonial archaeological paradigms, but its involvement has not necessary led Maltese archaeology on a postcolonial path; instead *Missione* control over the archaeological process in Tas-Silġ has reproduced or even enhanced asymmetries of power typical of colonial encounters. This research suggests that these two apparently competing dimensions always coexisted in the *Missione* – Tas-Silġ relationship, forming part of the identity of both the research entity and the archaeological site. This research worked on this complexity and carved out a space for the archaeology in Tas-Silġ within the debate on postcolonial archaeologies (on this 2.5).

9.2.1 Between colonial and postcolonial

It has been shown that against the dense and contradictory colonial debate of the 1950s-early 1960s (5.2), archaeology was an arena of political and intellectual power assertions and contrasts (Chapter 5). In those years the British firmly governed the politics of archaeology in its Mediterranean colony and imprinted a clear direction to the discipline with the Survey (5.3). The colonial shaping of the discipline acted on complementary levels: it adopted a specific field practice, the survey, and a specific cultural and chronological research objective, the prehistory.

The Survey was a colonial endeavour in that it adopted colonial strategies, it was set up and managed by colonial apparatuses, and the outcomes would have fed into a colonial system of archaeological knowledge. In the context of this research the notion of colonial, however, does not imply any *a priori* dichotomy between colonizers – colonized, but rather pictures specific power relations, which involve forms of negotiation and association with part of the local political and intellectual establishment (2.5). The involvement of local institutions and people is essential to the accomplishment of British colonialism in the Mediterranean in that it strengthens and expands through negotiation the chain of consensus around it. This study claims that although the Survey carefully replicated this pattern it ultimately failed in that it could not control the predictable rise of a counterpower to the management of Maltese politics of archaeology (5.4).

Key to this disruption was the anti-colonial accord between *Missione* and local government, which stemmed from Maltese feverish pre-independence circumstances (5.2.3). A democratically elected Maltese government invited a team of Italian professionals to conduct excavations on Maltese soil. The underlying political motivation was to subvert the archaeological construct that the British colonial authority had imposed with the 'Survey project'. In this perspective the *Missione* project was instrumental in loosening British colonial power over archaeological matters.

On a specific archaeological level the *Missione* project countered piece by piece the colonial construct shaped around the Survey (5.4). History replaced prehistory as research focus, single-sited excavations replaced the survey as investigations strategy, a foreign team replaced individual British researchers that worked with locals and within local institutions. This point on the organization of the research is

telling of the complexity of colonial and post-colonial dynamics. The rise on Maltese archaeological scene of the *Missione* saw the individualistic approach adopted by the British replaced with team logic (5.5.2). This difference held an important consequence because while single British professionals camouflaged easily and relied heavily on local resources, the Italian team outsourced only specific aspects of the investigations, having within the team most of the skills needed to carry out the research. Its outsider nature could not be concealed, even if this had been planned. It has been noted elsewhere that the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) promoted by British colonial government not only recorded Indian archaeological monuments and sites but also trained a whole generation of local archaeologists (Gallupalli 2010, 42-43). Similarly in Malta the Survey shaped the archaeological knowledge of local individuals involved to some extent in the project. Colonial authority acted on its possession through a network of local institutions, which it indirectly controlled and managed; this necessarily softens the distinction between insiders and outsiders and articulates group formations where both exogenous/colonizer and endogenous/colonized are involved. Very different was the case of the *Missione*, which was born, and always remained, an outsider element. It worked with local bodies, yet never through them: in this way, although it may possibly have affected decision making on specific issues, it never invaded the host country's sphere of competence.

This distinction is clear in the relationships between the newly established *Missione* and the major Maltese heritage institution, the Museum (5.4.2; 5.4.3). With the institution of *Missione* and the appointment of a Maltese Archaeological curator at the Museum the idea of a foreign expert to be locally employed became redundant (5.4.3); this showed that there was no need for direct Italian interference in the

Museum work, as had happened previously under the British. The separation of the two entities with the local authority supervising the activities of the foreign research team sounds like an important turning point toward a decolonisation of the archaeological discipline. It may be argued, however, that the institution of the *Missione* was first of all political archaeological and this had no doubt an impact on the relationship between the Italian team and the local archaeological authority. This research suggests that Museum did not have any real power over this politically agreed project. This hierarchy of power gave to the *Missione* a free hand with historical archaeology in Malta and relegated the Museum to the role of pencil-pusher for the whole operation. It is evident how the *Missione* politically negotiated a new form of outside control of Maltese archaeology; on the one hand it overcame colonial power structures, but, on the other hand, it did not empower local entities (5.2; 5.5).

The issue of *Missione* power over Maltese archaeological matters underpins the discussion of its neo-colonial nature (7.2.1; 7.2.2). The same narrative of cooperation, so widely deployed to describe *Missione* involvement (6.3.2), has been clearly associated with neo-colonial attitudes (2.5). In particular European countries have adopted the rhetoric of cooperation to either maintain or establish privileged cultural relations with their former colonies (2.5). The Anglo-Maltese project in Xhagra offers some interesting insights into how joint projects with former colonies can be interpreted as subtle form of neo-colonialism (7.2.1; 7.2.2).

Malta has never been an Italian colony; however, the Maltese traditionally perceived Italy as the direct antagonist to Britain in matters affecting the Islands' fortunes (5.1). The Maltese polarized political scene was traditionally dominated by two major parties: the pro-Italian

National Party (NP) and the pro-British Labour Party (MLP). The NP establishment that guided Malta towards Independence was directly involved in the advent of the *Missione*. The Italian project mirrored, in archaeological terms, claims and achievements of this discrete section of Maltese society. In this perspective, the investigations in Tas-Silġ can be interpreted as outpost of partisan-backed foreign archaeology rather than an early example of post-colonial archaeology in Malta (5.5.2).

9.2.2 Further ambivalences of *Missione* project

The *Missione* project was constructed on the ambivalent ground of post-colonialism, and of external and factional control. The *Missione* built its success, and then its failure, on these contradictory foundations (Chapter 6). The *Missione* project at Tas-Silġ perfectly suited the cultural and political context of early post-colonial Malta. The reliance on external archaeological resources was a matter of necessity for the new-born Maltese State. This was particularly true in the context of historic archaeology, which in the previous decade was mostly neglected at the advantage of Prehistoric studies as championed by British colonial authorities (6.3; 6.6). Making good use of the circumstances of the time, the *Missione* became the most reliable research entity for Maltese historic archaeology. The research outcomes, disseminated at an unparalleled rate, enhanced the *Missione*'s scientific stature, and made this project an essential source of material for the construction of a distinctive Maltese past (4.3; 6.3; 6.6).

In the years that followed the 1960s fieldwork activities the *Missione*'s ability to produce politically valuable knowledge became disrupted by new Maltese national and cultural events (6.4) (6.4.4); the impact of macro-politics, however, was only marginal and the main explanation for the *Missione*'s failure lay in the micro-politics of the

Italian project. For example, the *Missione* failed to formally conclude its project, which resulted in ethical and scientific criticisms. *Missione* never delivered the final publication, as it never finished the post-excavation (6.4). The lack of a formal conclusion meant that the *Missione* was not able to discharge its responsibilities for the site (6.6). The publication of the research outcomes would have formally marked the conclusion of the Italian archaeological project; it could have produced very different outcomes to the ethical and intellectual implications of its future involvement.

When the *Missione* withdrew in the 1980s, it left behind not only incomplete research but also an abandoned site, and a large quantity of finds that required proper storage and management. What the *Missione* took to Italy was the extensive knowledge of Maltese archaeology shaped in years of investigations; knowledge that the host country could have accessed in the form of a comprehensive publication of the research outcomes. If one looks at those circumstances from the perspective of who was left behind to deal with the material by-products of this knowledge process (2.2), it is easy to understand the local feelings of betrayal and resentment towards the *Missione* (8.3.4). The Museum Department, burdened with legal and ethical responsibilities of managing what the *Missione* had left behind, might have shared those sentiments (6.4.3).

9.2.3 The rhetoric of attack

It is not a coincidence that the narrative of the Italian 'robbery/attack' at Tas-Silġ, popular among local archaeologists and non-archaeologists, gained strength after the *Missione* withdrew. Outside the archaeological community the Italian robbery is just one instance of a general disaffection with archaeology, which is mostly perceived as a tool of

centralized and overarching power (8.3). From the perspective of the people in Marsaxlokk, all archaeology is by outsiders and it does make little difference if the people involved in the research come from La Valletta or from another country (8.3.4).

Within the archaeological community this rhetoric of the attack has many faces, some of them unexpected. The view of a shameful and unskilled attack on the archaeological deposit by the Italians, was adopted when Malta was still formally a British colony (5.4.2). The 'site-centred' and 'total approach' adopted by the Italians, in contrast with the territorial survey promoted by the British, had no doubt an impact in shaping this narrative (5.5.1).

The discourse of 'attack' has subtly informed many debates about the *Missione*'s position at Tas-Silġ ever since. This idea recently regained strength in relation to the extensive investigations of prehistoric archaeology (6.5.2). This circumstance exposes some strands of the tension still governing the relation between foreign teams and host country. This new chapter in the *Missione*'s research breaches the core principles of the previous research agreement in allowing the project to avoid concluding what was left unfinished by the first *Missione*. The prehistoric investigations subtly restate the *Missione*'s privileged position over the archaeology in Tas-Silġ, by granting the *Missione* the rare opportunity to excavate an untouched and extremely rich prehistoric deposit. In addition, the idea of unconstrained and total excavation advocated by the *Missione*, clashes with the ethical and scientific calls of the local archaeological community and heritage bodies to slow down the excavation rate on the islands (6.4.1; 8.6.1).

It is interesting to note that this rhetoric was inversed to discredit the University of Malta research investigation (7.3.1). In excavating Tas-Silġ South enclosure, the University intervened in was

perceived as an Italian domain. This narrative of the attack always implies disruption to the *status quo*. The circumstances of the University project revealed how well embedded the idea of Tas-Silġ as an Italian territory still prevailed in the 1990s. It also illustrates how things had evolved from the first campaign in 1963, when Italian archaeologists intruded into a British colonial territory.

9.2.4 Limits of archaeology by outsiders in post-colonial Malta

When a newly established Italian expedition came back to Tas-Silġ in the 1990s, to complete its unfinished business, the world of the first *Missione* was ready to be regarded as past history. In the *Missione*'s absence Malta had progressed along its post-colonial path and Maltese archaeology, free from overarching foreign influence, was finally taking shape. However, the Italian researchers underestimated the real impact of its return on the Maltese archaeological scene. It used the dangerous narrative of continuity with the 1960s investigations to claim back control of the Tas-Silġ site (6.5). They thought that state-of-the-art archaeological practice, coupled with a serious commitment to conservation, would be enough to ensure a smooth resumption of research at Tas-Silġ (6.5.1). The *Missione*, however, failed to take into account key factors essential for the success of such a strategy: how the combined issues of the final publication and of the material effects of its withdrawal weighed heavily on its resumption (9.2.3).

The Second *Missione* was largely due to the commitment of two key individuals, Ciasca and Gouder. Their personal histories become institutional and international. In the impact of the *Missione*, the transition between these different dimensions, does not appear to have be planned in advance. The interpersonal level informed early institutional

decision-making and agreements (6.4.5). One of the main consequences of this personal-institutional overlap was that the Second *Missione* was perceived to be the natural follow-up of a process started in the 1960s. Therefore, Ciasca and Gouder could claim to reactivate this project in order to bring to a conclusion a scientific endeavour started in 1963, but they did not assess how an Italian-only research project would fit in to present-day Malta (6.6). Over the years of the Second *Missione*, very little was done to amend this situation, or set up programmes of cooperation, knowledge sharing and transfer with the host country (7.2).

9.2.5 Post-colonial archaeology in Tas-Silġ: a long way to go?

There is a broad consensus among the Maltese archaeological community that Italian control over the archaeological process at Tas-Silġ was an unacceptable form of intellectual and material neo-colonialism (7.2). It was argued that an Italian expedition was no longer the right answer to the archaeological needs of Tas-Silġ and Malta. However, it is admitted that the resources and skills developed by *Missione* at Tas-Silġ were still vital and needed to be preserved for the sake of the monument, and of a common scientific knowledge. The *Missione* is a relic of a weighty past that Malta is striving to confine to history, but at the same time it is crucial part of the identity of the Tas-Silġ site and a leading player in shaping Maltese archaeological heritage. Not many wanted the *Missione* to be excluded from Tas-Silġ, but everyone did call for its presence to be of a different type (7.5).

The south area University excavations had a significant role in shaking the traditional construct of the 'Italian' site (7.3). The post-colonial message of this project was clear and it led to a radical change in how archaeology had been traditionally conducted at Tas-Silġ. The

University excavation was a local alternative to archaeology carried out by outsiders. It counterbalanced the exclusively Italian *Missione* 'club' with an international team led by a local institution. This project responded to the highly specialized profile of the Italian team, with an alternative approach that included fieldwork training for young local professionals (7.3.2). However, the adversarial relationship between the Italian and Maltese teams, amplified the separation between local and foreign archaeology, and perpetuated mechanisms of exclusion and alienation (7.3.3; 7.3.4). This contrasts sharply with the idea championed by many local archaeological practitioners that Tas-Silġ should be a platform of research synergies and common archaeological knowledge.

The circumstances of the *Missione* and University excavations are just one instance of partisan and politicized Maltese archaeology. The new legislative scenario introduced in 2002 by the Cultural Heritage Act has institutionalized the deep-rooted fragmentation of the discipline and the tensions around Italian archaeology in Tas-Silġ (7.4). In particular the tensions between regulator (SCH) and manager (HM) around spheres of action and responsibilities in Tas-Silġ, wonderfully exposed the ambiguity of the relationship between Malta and the *Missione*. At the core of this contested relationship is the identity of the Italian research entity. It is foreigner but it is not an outsider in Malta archaeological scene; it is formally postcolonial but its making archaeology in Tas-Silġ sounds at times unmistakably neo-colonial (7.5).

The decolonisation of the archaeological discipline in Malta has never been a smooth and one-way process, but it has rather fed on controversies and contrasts. The comforting idea that colonial and outsider evolves in postcolonial and local clashes with the contested circumstances of archaeology in Tas-Silġ and the complexity of Maltese decolonisation process.

9.2.6 Postcolonial conundrum and materiality

Material and intellectual alienation was produced by the excavation of the Tas-Silġ site: the physical alienation of the site from the landscape was pivotal in defining the identity of Tas-Silġ; the site's layout was instrumental in the intellectual construction set up by archaeological professionals; physical and intellectual isolation were mutually constructed and mediated encounters between insiders and outsiders.

The boundary wall defined the limits of the Tas-Silġ site, determined what was archaeologically relevant (8.2.2), and set the space allocated to the Italian investigations (8.3.1). It also accommodated the site-centred approach traditionally adopted by *Missione* and fed its intellectual segregation. The paradoxical circumstances of Italian and Maltese investigations (8.3.2) amplified even further the *Missione* isolation.

On the other hand this detachment from the surroundings fixed in time and space the idea of Tas-Silġ as Italian archaeological domain. This was maintained even when the connection between the site and the *Missione* was history. This study suggests that the isolated nature of the site played a role in the construction of the narrative of continuity between first and second *Missione*. At the same time, however, it burdened this association with all the negative impacts of the degrading state of site and of the uncertainties surrounding the artefacts (8.4).

The interplay between physical isolation and excavation circumstances created intellectual barriers; however, they also allowed forms of interactions, which had not necessary evolved in time toward proper strategies of inclusion. The 'old school' approach to archaeology of the first *Missione* employed a few expert archaeologists, supported by a large number of local non-professionals. This created a long-term connection between Italian researchers and segments of Maltese

population that were otherwise excluded from the dissemination strategy set by *Missione*. Only the political and intellectual local establishment could understand the language, linguistic register and contents used in the official communications on the development of the research in Tas-Silġ (8.3.3).

The valuable connection with the locals was interrupted with the end of fieldwork in the 1970s and has not been re-established with the institution of the second *Missione*. Since the 1990s the Italian project has employed only formally trained archaeologists and has left little or no space for the inclusion of local non-professionals. (8.3.5) This archaeology made by professionals has ensured a good scientific practice throughout the archaeological process (6.5.1), but it has fallen short in addressing the effects of its activities. The detachment of the site from the local community of Marsaxlokk became so deep that barely anyone was aware that the Italians were excavating in Tas-Silġ (8.3.4).

9.3 Foreign archaeology in postcolonial contexts: a lesson from Tas-Silġ

This research, while investigating the peculiar issues of the Tas-Silġ case, also offered insights on the more general issue of making archaeology and the complex debate regarding archaeological decolonisation.

The Tas-Silġ case demonstrates that to fully understand the identity of any archaeological site, it is necessary to micro-excavate its making. As the analysis of Tas-Silġ has shown, making archaeology cannot be confined to research agendas, professional practices, or the subsequent interpretation of the archaeological evidence. Making archaeology has a broader meaning: it involves a complex chain of

associations and displacement of resources, which extend well beyond the confined space of archaeological practice. It is a collective process that creates, negotiates and renegotiates the conditions for an archaeological interpretation of material past. In this process, as the Tas-Silġ case demonstrated, the identity of material past is negotiated and, not less importantly, the identity of the human entities engaged with it. The case of *Missione* in Tas-Silġ offered a compelling example on how complex and nuanced the mechanisms of power that establishes archaeological facts and archaeological entities can be, and how shifts in power relations can challenge them and modified their status.

It prompts a careful consideration of the fragile balance on which archaeological projects abroad are often set. This directly calls into question the same knowledge process in archaeology; where something is left in the host country and most is taken away through processes of knowledge displacement. Involving the host country in the actual process of knowledge and integrating its research approach and perspectives might be a good starting point to stop such knowledge haemorrhage and to free archaeology abroad from colonial reminiscences.

Tas-Silġ also suggests that the asymmetries of power established by making archaeology involving foreign elements and post-colonial contexts needs to be approached with caution. The temptation is to evaluate archaeological experiences against widely accepted paradigms of colonial, post-colonial and neo-colonial, but the analysis of the association between the Italian expedition and the Tas-Silġ site has clearly demonstrated how misleading and reductive those paradigms can be, without a careful assessment of the micro politics of each circumstance.

9.4 Future research potential

The making of the Tas-Silġ site was at the heart of this study. Crucial aspects of the site's complex identity were explored and unveiled. Despite all the work undertaken, this micro-universe has still much to offer in terms of research perspectives. Within the walls, there is scope for an investigation of how the historical and social complexity that made Tas-Silġ may inform future decision-making in terms of archaeological research, conservation, interpretation and display.

This study focused on an inner perspective, on the institutions and individuals involved in the making of this archaeological entity. However, in tackling crucial issues related to the physical and intellectual detachment of site making, this thesis set out the conceptual foundations for a specific investigation on the modes of interaction between this secluded archaeological domain and the outside world. This field of research may find sources of inspiration in some of the points raised in this study. For instance, drawing on the research outcomes, it would be interesting to explore limits and perspectives of the concept of landscape for the Tas-Silġ site.

Leaving the comfort zone of the Tas-Silġ and Malta, this research may also inspire studies (which should involve comparative analysis) on the fascinating topic of archaeology by outsiders in contexts with a history of colonial rule. To set some boundaries to this huge area of study, it might be reasonable to develop further research on ex-British possessions in the Mediterranean that have been object of foreign/non-British archaeological interests at some point in their post-colonial history. Specific analysis on the role of major British archaeological institutions of the Mediterranean area in affecting the politics of archaeology in ex-colonies would also be fascinating.

Lastly, this study highlighted impacts of individual and group interactions of the making archaeology in Tas-Silġ. However it did not assess the equally interesting gender dynamics within this process. Just to mention one of the possible research perspective the *Missione* has had a long tradition of female directorship: Ciasca, then Rossignani and Semeraro. Key role of female scholars in the Italian research at Tas-Silġ may inspire contributions to the debate on gender in archaeology. Research on the challenges and problems of overcoming the discourse of male-centred Western archaeology would be particularly interesting. Leaving aside the concept of Western archaeology (that *per se* does not do justice to the diversity and complexity of the territorial contexts usually associated with it), a good starting point for investigating the boundaries of this issue would be the Italian archaeological community.

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Appendix

Time charts

DATE	1950									
	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59
POLITICS	NP Mizzi	NP gov: PM Borg Oliver					MLP gov: PM Mintoff			State of emergency: Colonial direct rule
	Colonial indirect rule							Defense White Paper		
ARCHAEO	Prehistoric Survey									
	Veto on B. Brea	Evans: Archaeological Assistant for the Survey								
	Baldacchino and Harden project on Maltese Phoenician antiquities					Zammit Museum director; post of curator vacant: Italian option			Trump: Museum Curator	
TAS-SILG							Cagiano 1st visit to Malta			

DATE	1960									
	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69
POLITICS	Colonial direct rule	NP gov: PM Borg Olivier								
		New Constitution			Political Independence	British Governor General				
								Anglo-Maltese crisis		
ARCHAEO	Prehistoric Survey									
		Material ready for publication but not funds								
		Skorba excavations Trump								
	Trump: Museum Curator	Mallia: Museum curator - archaeological section								
TAS-SILG		Cagiano 2nd visit and report	First Missione							
		British interest	Direct Moscati							Direct Ciasca
			Scient Direct Cagiano							

DATE	1970									
	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79
POLITICS	Governor General									
	NP gov.	MLP gov: Mintoff PM								
			New Anglo-Maltese defence agreement							
ARCHAEO		Survey publication								
TAS-SILG	Ciasca: Missione and Centro Director						Bondi': Missione and Centro Director			
		Post-excavations in Tas-Silg convent					Stop research		Stop research	

DATE	1980									
	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89
POLITICS	MLP gov: Mintoff PM							NP gov		
	University reform: closure of humanties and sciences							Humanities and sciences reinstated		
ARCHAEO						Conference: 'Archaeology and Fertility Cult in the Ancient Mediterranean'		Archaeology in Department of Classics		
							Anglo-Maltese Xaghra Circle project			
TAS-SILG	Bondi': Missione and Centro Director		Institute Direct.: Acquaro.		Storing issue and transfer of excavations material from Convent to Cottonera					
	Post-excavations in Tas-Silg convent				Missione stopped to exist					

DATE	1990									
	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
POLITICS	NP gov.				MLP gov.				NP gov.	
	Application for full EU membership				Malta opted out EU				Reactivation EU member	
ARCHAEO	Anglo-Maltese Xaghra Circle project						Museum Department supervision on Missione			
TAS-SILG	Ciasca with Museum Department help set up Tas-Silg warehouse in Cottonera					Ciasca plan for long-term research project on the site	Second Missione			
								On-site activities: Northern enclosure		
										Cons. Progr
					University project proposal		University of Malta project: Southern enclosure			

DATE	2000												
	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	11	12	13
POLITICS	NP gov.													
				Refer EU	EU full membership									
ARCHAEO	Museum Depart supervision on Missione	CHA2002: split functions Museum Department between SCH and HM												
TAS-SILG	Second Missione: Northern enclosures													
				Prehistoric research										
	Conservation programme													
	University project Southern enclosure													

Coded list of interviewees

Interviewee code	Organization	Interview format
1A	Missione	Semi-structured email
		Casual conversations
1B	Missione	Semi-structured face-to-face
1C	Missione	Semi-structured face-to-face
1D	Missione	Semi-structured face-to-face
		Casual conversations
1E	Missione	Semi-structured face-to-face
1F	Missione	Semi-structured face-to-face
1H	Missione	Semi-structured email
1I	Missione	Semi-structured email
	University of Malta	
2A	University of Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
2B	University of Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
		Casual conversations
2C	University of Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
3A	Heritage Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
		Casual conversations
3B	Heritage Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
3C	Heritage Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
3D	Heritage Malta	Casual conversations
3E	Heritage Malta	Semi-structured face-to-face
4A	Superintendence of Cultural Heritage	Semi-structured face-to-face

4B		Superintendence of Cultural Heritage	Semi-structured face-to-face
4C		Superintendence of Cultural Heritage	Semi-structured face-to-face
4D		Superintendence of Cultural Heritage	Casual conversations
4E		Superintendence of Cultural Heritage	Casual conversations
2-1	A	University of Malta (students)	Focus group
	B		
	C		
	D		
3-1	A	Heritage Malta (staff)	Focus group
	B		
	C		
	D		
	E		
	F		
	G		
5A		Tas-Silġ convent	Open face-to-face
5B		Missione 1960s	Open face-to-face
5C		Marsaxlokk	Casual conversation
5D		Marsaxlokk	Casual conversation
5E		Marsaxlokk Council	Open face-to-face
5F		Missione 1960s	Open face-to-face
5G		Missione 2000	Open face-to-face

Consent form for focus groups

Informed Consent Form for Focus Group Subject in Research Studies

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Project: **Making archaeology abroad. A postcolonial perspective in Malta**

UCL Research Ethics Committee Project ID Number: **1554/001**

- Thank you for considering to take part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.
- If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
- I understand that my participation will be taped/video recorded and I am aware of and consent to, any use you intend to make of the recordings after the end of the project.
- I understand that if I decide at any other time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

Participant's Statement

I …….....

agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed: Date:

Researcher's Statement

I ANNA MARIA ROSSI.

confirm that I have carefully explained the purpose of the study to the participant and outlined any reasonably foreseeable risks or benefits (where applicable).

Signed: Date:

Group agreement

Group Agreement for Maintaining Confidentiality

This form is intended to further ensure confidentiality of data obtained during the course of the study entitled 'Making archaeology abroad. A postcolonial perspective in Malta'. All parties involved in the research, including all focus group members, will be asked to read the following statement and sign their names indicating that they agree to comply.

> *I hereby affirm that I will not communicate or in any manner disclose publicly information discussed during the course of this focus group interview. I agree not to talk about material relating to this study or interview with anyone outside of my fellow focus group members and the moderator.*

Name:_____

Signature:_____

Moderator's Signature:_____

Information sheet for interviews

INFORMATION SHEET FOR FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW SUBJECT IN RESEARCH STUDIES

You will be given a copy of this information sheet and be asked to sign a consent form.

Title of Project: **Making archaeology abroad. A postcolonial perspective in Malta**.

UCL Research Ethics Committee Project ID Number: **1554/001**

Name, Address and Contact Details of Investigator:

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Institute of Archaeology – UCL
31-34 Gordon square
WC1H OPY
London – UK
Tel: 0044 (0)20 76794762
Mobile: 0044 (0)77 83526859
anna.rossi@ucl.ac.uk

I would like to invite you to participate in this research project.
You should only participate if you want to; choosing not to take part will not disadvantage you in any way. Before you decide whether you want to take part, it is important for you to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information.

Details of the Study:
The main aim of this research is to gain a comprehensive picture of the 'social dimension' of the site of Tas-Silg nowadays. In particular, the study investigates the terms upon which the research activities performed by heritage professionals over the last 50 years have affected the overall perception of the site in the present.
In order to gain a thick description of this dimension for Tas-Silg, this study relies on qualitative research methodology. Face-to-face interviewing is one of the methods applied.

A copy of the final report will be offer to you.

It is up to you to decide whether to take part or not. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

All data will be collected and stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 (UK), the Data Protection Act 2001 (Malta) and the Data Protection Act 1996 (Italy).

Informed consent for interviews

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR……IN RESEARCH STUDIES

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the research.

Title of Project: **Making archaeology abroad. A postcolonial perspective in Malta.**

UCL Research Ethics Committee Project ID Number: **1554/001**

- Thank you for considering to take part in this research. The person organising the research must explain the project to you before you agree to take part.
- If you have any question arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask the researcher before you decide whether to join in. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep and refer to at any time.
- I understand that my participation will be recorded and I am aware of and consent to, any use you intend to make of the recordings after the end of the project.
- I understand that if I decide at any time during the research that I no longer wish to participate in this project, I can notify the researchers involved and be withdrawn from it immediately.
- I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes of this research study. I understand that such information will be treated as strictly confidential and handled in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 (UK), the Data Protection Act 2001 (Malta) and the Data Protection Act 1996 (Italy)

Participant's Statement

I……

Agree that the research project named above has been explained to me to my satisfaction and I agree to take part in the study. I have read both the notes written above and the Information Sheet about the project, and understand what the research study involves.

Signed: Date:

Researcher's Statement

I Anna Maria Rossi

Confirm that I have carefully explained the purpose of the study to the participant and outlined any reasonably foreseeable risks or benefits (where applicable).

Signed: Date:

Queries

Queries	Entity	Interviewee code	Coded text (% coverage)
Knowledge transfer	HM	3-1	1.65%
	Uni Malta	2-1	9.58%
	Missione	1H	2.98%
	Locals	5B	11.51%
	HM	3A	1.72
	SCH	4B	8.84%
Data sharing	HM	3-1	9.30%
	Uni Malta	2-1	4.00%
	HM	3C	3.18%
	HM	3E	3.67%
	HM	3A	0.76%
	HM	3B	7.08%
	Missione	1I	2.79%
	Uni Malta	2A	2.81%
	Uni Malta	2C	1.84%
	Uni Malta	2B	1.00%
Missione control	HM	3-1	16.15%
	Uni Malta	2-1	14.22%
	Locals	5B	18.70%
	HM	3C	7.04%
	HM	3E	4.96%
	HM	3A	10.59%
	HM	3B	12.17%
	Missione	1H	4.76%
	Missione	1F	0.68%
	Missione	1I	6.59%
	Missione	1D	1.68%
	Missione	1E	4.40%
	SCH	4A	9.78%
	SCH	4B	5.54%
	Uni Malta	2A	3.49%
	Uni Malta	2B	10.94%
Colonial-Postcolonial	HM	3-1	7.25%
	Uni Malta	2-1	4.78%
	Locals	5C	1.72%
	Locals	5B	5.18%
	HM	3C	2.10%
	HM	3A	6.30%
	HM	3B	5.45%
	Missione	1H	4.76%
	Missione	1F	0.68%
	Missione	1I	5.59%
	Missione	1D	2.50%
	Missione	1E	17.60%
	Missione	1B	3.08%
	Uni Malta	2A	7.95%
Missione Responsibilities	HM	3-1	7.92%
	Uni Malta	2-1	1.31%
	HM	3A	7.48%
	Missione	1I	2.97%
	Uni Malta	2B	7.68%
	Missione	1D	7.60%
	Missione	1E	10.38%
	Missione	1B	6.85%
	Missione	1C	2.04%
	Missione	1A	2.08%
Break/Continuity 1st and	HM	3-1	18.96%

2nd Missione	Uni Malta	2-1	8.69%
	HM	3C	9.89%
	HM	3A	8.49%
	HM	3B	1.94%
	Missione	1I	10.03%
	SCH	4A	7.75%
	SCH	4C	17.00%
	SCH	4B	5.88%
	Uni Malta	2A	8.72%
	Uni Malta	2C	2.41%
	Uni Malta	2B	2.73%
	Missione	1H	36.03%
	Missione	1F	19.18%
	Missione	1D	7.01%
	Missione	1E	8.81%
	Missione	1B	14.62%
	Missione	1C	4.03%
	Missione	1A	13.59%
Site Interpretation	HM	3-1	4.01%
	Locals	5C	1.80%
	HM	3C	6.01%
	HM	3E	2.19%
	HM	3A	2.22%
	HM	3B	4.50%
	Missione	1I	6.90%
	SCH	4C	3.69%
	Uni Malta	2B	1.00%
Public dissemination	HM	3-1	2.80%
	Uni Malta	2-1	0.36%
	HM	3C	2.63%
	HM	3E	1.84%
	HM	3A	7.60%
	HM	3B	3.13%
	Missione	1I	14.02%
	SCH	4A	11.00%
	SCH	4C	6.49%
	Uni Malta	2A	2.60%
	Uni Malta	2B	2.73%
Scientific dissemination_Missione	HM	3-1	4.43%
	Uni Malta	2-1	1.85%
	HM	3C	4.20%
	HM	3E	5.51%
	HM	3A	3.20%
	HM	3B	0.28%
	Missione	1I	6.90%
	Uni Malta	2A	2.81%
	Uni Malta	2C	2.44%
	Uni Malta	2B	3.73%
Archaeological practice_Missione	HM	3-1	9.15%
	Uni Malta	2-1	6.40%
	Locals	5C	1.26%
	Locals	5B	16.69%
	HM	3C	10.15%
	HM	3E	22.24%
	HM	3A	12.87%
	HM	3B	6.45%
	Missione	1I	14.03
	SCH	4A	11.10%
	SCH	4C	11.81%

	SCH	4B	16.77%
	Uni Malta	2C	9.63%
	Uni Malta	2B	15.94%
	Missione	1H	39.20%
	Missione	1F	28.17%
	Missione	1D	5.02%
	Missione	1E	21.75%
	Missione	1B	20.24%
	Missione	1C	0.68%
	Missione	1A	20.77
Conservation_Missione	Missione	1H	6.68%
	Missione	1F	8.98%
	Missione	1E	2.20%
	Missione	1B	8.84%
	Missione	1C	3.52%
	Missione	1A	13.00%
	HM	3-1	10.45%
	HM	3C	6.27%
	HM	3E	4.42%
	HM	3A	11.63%
	HM	3B	1.98%
	Missione	1I	5.60%
	Uni Malta	2A	4.73%
	Uni Malta	2C	0.29%
	Uni Malta	2B	0.91%
Missione Future	Missione	1H	7.49%
	Missione	1F	15.55%
	Missione	1D	0.54%
	Missione	1E	6.19%
	Missione	1B	2.70%
	Missione	1C	4.03%
	Missione	1A	3.76%
	HM	3-1	10.72%
	Uni Malta	2-1	5.53%
	HM	3C	7.06%
	HM	3E	4.96%
	HM	3A	4.64%
	HM	3B	4.79%
	Missione	1I	10.03%
	SCH	4A	7.75%
	SCH	4C	11.81%
	SCH	4B	5.88%
	Uni Malta	2A	8.72%
	Uni Malta	2B	2.73%